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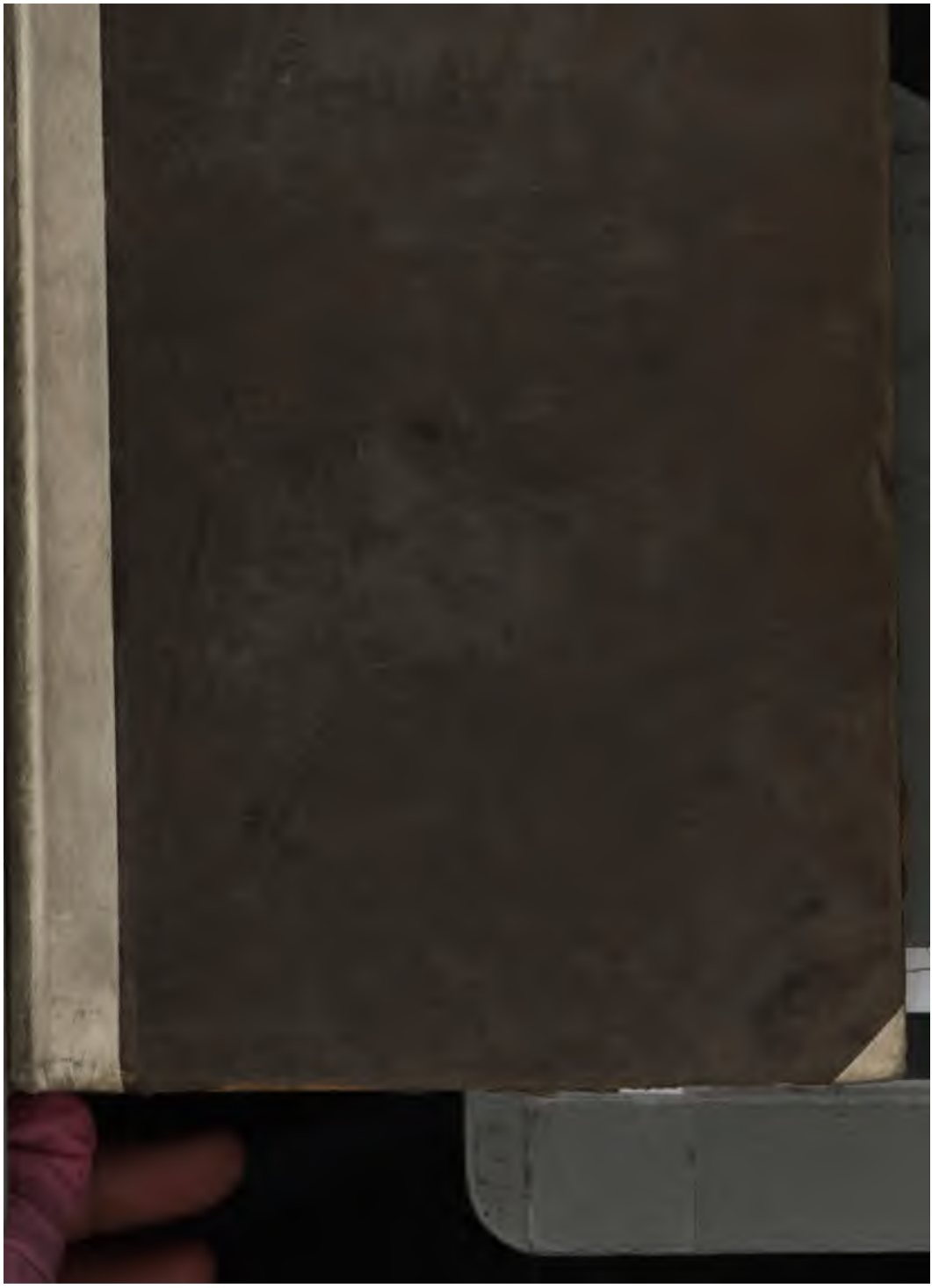

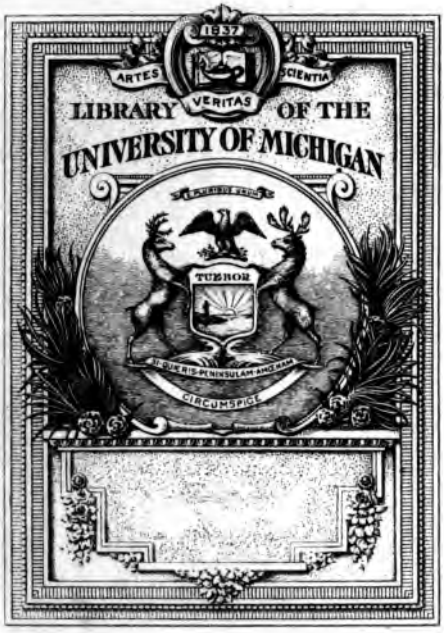
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PERSIAN TALES

VOL. II.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

UNIV. OF MICH.

CHATTO & WINDUS, PUBLISHERS

HELIOG. LEMERCIER PARIS

THE STORY OF REPSIMA

Pétis de la Croix, François

THOUSAND [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

PETIS [illegible]

IN TWO [illegible]

[illegible]

London
CHATTO & WINDUS [illegible]
1892

Pétis de la Croix, François

THE THOUSAND AND ONE DAYS

PERSIAN TALES

EDITED BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY STANLEY L. WOOD

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1892

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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THE THOUSAND AND ONE DAYS

V

The Story of the King Bedreddin-Lolo and of his Vizir Atalmulc, surnamed the Sad Vizir

BEDREDDIN-LOLO, King of Damascus, had as his grand vizir a man of wealth —so says the history of his time.

This minister, who was named Atalmulc, which means a Present to the Kingdom, was very worthy of the fine name he bore. His zeal in the king's service was indefatigable, his vigilance would not be deceived, his genius was penetrating and far-reaching, and with all this his disinterestedness was the admiration of all; but he was surnamed the Sad Vizir, for he usually appeared plunged in profound melancholy.

He was always serious, whatever absurd action he saw take place at court; he never laughed, however amusing a thing was said before him.

One day the king was conversing with him in private, and related to him, laughing heartily, an adventure he had just heard; the vizir listened so seriously that Bedreddin was disconcerted. 'Atalmulc,' he said, 'you are a strange character, you always look sombre and sad; for all the years you have been with me I have never seen on your face the least expression of joy.'

'My lord,' replied the vizir, 'your majesty should not be astonished at it; everyone has his troubles; there is no man on earth who is exempt from grief.'

'Your answer is not correct,' replied the king; 'because you have doubtless some secret trouble, on that account must all men have one too? Do you really believe what you say?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied Atalmulc, 'such is the condition of the children of Adam, our hearts cannot know entire satisfaction. Judge of others by yourself, sire: is your majesty perfectly content?'

'Oh! as for me,' cried Bedreddin, 'I cannot

be so. I have enemies. I am bowed down with the weight of an empire, a thousand cares occupy my mind and trouble the tranquillity of my life; but I am persuaded that there are in the world endless private persons whose happy days are spent in pleasure unmixed with bitterness, and at least, if no one is exempt from grief, everyone is not, like you, absorbed in his affliction. You rouse, I admit, in me a keen curiosity to know what makes you so dreamy and sad. Tell me why you are so insensible to smiles, which form the sweetest charm of society.'

'I will obey you, my lord,' replied the vizir, 'and discover to you the cause of my secret troubles by relating to you the story of my life.'

THE STORY OF ATALMULC, SURNAMED THE SAD VIZIR, AND THE PRINCESS ZELICA-BEGHUME

'I am the only son of a rich jeweller of Bagdad. My father, who was called Coaja-Abdallah, spared nothing for my education; he gave me, almost from my infancy, masters who taught me all sorts of sciences, such as philosophy, law, theology; and, above all, he made me learn all the different

languages spoken in Asia, so that if at any time I travelled in that part of the world they might be useful to me on my travels.

'I had a natural taste for pleasure and expenditure. My father perceived it with grief; he even tried by wise remonstrances to destroy this inclination in me; but what impression can the sensible advice of a father make on a libertine son? I paid no attention to that of Abdallah, and imputed it to the chagrin caused by old age. One day that I was walking with him in the garden of our house and that he, as usual, was chiding my conduct, he said to me: "O, my son! I have remarked that till now my reprimands have only wearied you; but you will soon be relieved of an importunate censor; the Angel of Death is hovering over me, I am about to descend into the abyss of eternity and leave you great wealth; take care not to put it to a bad use, or, at least, if you are unfortunate enough to dissipate it foolishly, do not fail to have recourse to that tree which you see in the middle of the garden; attach a fatal rope to one of its branches and prevent thereby all the evils which accompany poverty."

'He died shortly afterwards, as he had predicted.

I gave him a superb funeral and then took possession of all his wealth. I found it so enormous that I thought I could with impunity indulge the inclination I had for pleasure. I increased the number of my servants, I gathered round me all the young men of the town. I kept open table and indulged in every kind of debauch, so that I insensibly consumed my patrimony. My friends immediately abandoned me, and all my servants left me one after the other. What a change in my fortune! my courage was destroyed by it. I remembered then, but too late, the last words of my father. "How fully I deserve the situation in which I am placed," I said. "Why did I not profit by the advice of Abdallah? It was not without reason that he recommended me to be careful of my wealth. Is any state more terrible than that of a man who experiences want after having known abundance? Ah! at least I will not forget all his counsels. I have not forgotten that he advised me to terminate my life if misery befell me: it has befallen me. I will follow this advice, which is not less wise than the other; for when I shall have sold my house, the only thing remaining to me, and which would only suffice to keep me for a few

years, what must become of me? I shall be reduced to beg or die of hunger. What an alternative! I had better immediately hang myself. I cannot too soon free my mind from these cruel ideas."

'Thus saying, I went to buy a rope. I entered my garden, and approached the tree my father had indicated to me, and which seemed to me very well fitted for my design. I put two large stones at the foot of this tree, mounted them and proceeded to attach one end of the rope to a large branch; I made of the other a slip-knot, which I passed round my neck; then I sprang into the air from the two stones. The slip-knot, which I had made very well, was about to strangle me, when the branch to which the fatal rope was attached, yielding to the weight, broke off from the trunk, to which it only held feebly, and fell with me.

'I was at first very mortified at having made a futile effort to hang myself; but, on looking at the branch which had served my despair so ill, I perceived with surprise that some diamonds fell from it, and that it was hollow as well as the whole trunk of the tree. I ran to seek a hatchet in the house, and cut down the tree, which I found full of

rubies, emeralds and other precious stones. I quickly removed the slip-knot from my neck, and passed from despair to the keenest joy. Instead of abandoning myself to pleasure, and living as before, I resolved to embrace the profession of my father. I understood about precious stones, and I had reason to hope that I should not do badly in the business. I associated myself with two merchant-jewellers of Bagdad who were friends of Abdallah, and who were going to do business at Ormus.

'We betook ourselves all three to Bassora. We chartered a vessel there and embarked upon the gulf named after this town. We lived happily together, and our vessel, impelled by a favourable wind, ploughed the waves lightly.

'We passed our days enjoyably, and our voyage was about to finish as we wished, when my two associates caused me to recognise the fact that I was not in the society of very honest people. We were about to arrive at the head of the gulf and land, which put us in a good humour. In our joy we did not spare the exquisite wines, which we had been careful to make provision of at Bassora.

'After having drunk well, I fell asleep in the

middle of the night, quite dressed, on a sofa. Whilst I was sleeping profoundly my associates took me in their arms and threw me into the sea by a porthole of the vessel.

'I thought to drown in the depths, and I do not understand how I am still alive after that adventure. But the sea was rough, and the waves, as if Heaven had forbidden them to swallow me up, bore me to the foot of a mountain which bordered the head of the gulf on one side. I even found myself safe and sound on the bank, where I passed the rest of the night in thanking God for my delivery, which I could not be sufficiently grateful for.

'As soon as the day dawned I climbed with much trouble to the summit of the mountain, which was very jagged. I met several peasants of the neighbourhood, who were occupied in digging for crystal which they afterwards sold at Ormus. I related to them the danger to which my life had been exposed, and it seemed to them, as to me, that I had only escaped by a miracle. These good people took pity on me, they shared their provisions with me, which consisted of millet-seed and rice, and they conducted me to the great town of Ormus as soon as they had their loads of crystal.

I went to lodge in a caravanserai, where the first thing I saw was one of my associates.

'He seemed rather surprised to see a man whom he had thought had already served as prey to some marine monster: he ran to find his companion, to warn him of my arrival and to discuss the reception they should both give me. They had soon formed their decision. I saw them both a moment after: they entered the courtyard where I was, and presented themselves before me, without seeming to recognise me. "Ah! traitors," I said, "Heaven rendered your treachery futile. I still live in spite of your barbarity; return me promptly all my precious stones. I wish no longer to associate with such bad men." To this speech, which should have confused them, they had the impudence to reply thus:

'"Oh, robber! Oh, rogue! who are you and whence do you come? What stones? what effects have we which belong to you?"

'Thus saying, they struck me several blows with a stick; and as I threatened to go and complain to the cadi, they anticipated me and went to the judge. They made profound reverences to him, and after having presented several stones to him

which they had about them, and which were, perhaps, mine, they said to him:

'"Oh, torch of justice, light which dissipates the darkness of dishonesty, we have recourse to you. We are weak strangers; we come from the ends of the world to traffic here. Is it just that a thief should insult us, and will you permit him to take from us, by an imposture, what we have only acquired after endless labour, and at the risk of our lives?"

'"Who is the man whom you complain of?" said the cadi to them.

'"My lord," they replied, "we do not know him; we have never seen him."

'I arrived at the judge's house at that moment. They cried out as soon as they saw me:

'"There he is, my lord, this wretch, this thief, who is even bold enough to come to your palace, and to confront your glances, which should terrify the guilty. Great judge, deign to protect us."

'I approached the cadi to speak in my turn; but having no presents to offer him, it was impossible to me to make myself heard. The resolute and tranquil manner which the ease of my conscience gave me, passed in his prejudiced mind for a mark

of effrontery. He ordered his archers to conduct me to prison, which they did. Whilst they loaded me with chains, my companions went away triumphant, and well persuaded that I should have need of a fresh miracle to escape from the hands of the cadi.

'I should not indeed have escaped as happily as from the gulf, but for an incident which occurred, which was another visible sign of the goodness of Heaven.

'The peasants who had brought me to Ormus learnt by chance that I had been imprisoned. Touched with compassion, they went to the cadi; they told him how they had met me and detailed all I had told them on the mountain. The judge, on their report, opened his eyes, repented of not having wished to hear me, and resolved to investigate the matter.

'He sent for the two merchants at the caravanserai, but they were not there. They had already regained their vessel and set sail; for, in spite of the intervention of the judge, I did not fail to cause them uneasiness.

'So prompt a flight persuaded the cadi that I was unjustly imprisoned. He set me at liberty,

and this was the end of my association with these two dishonest jewellers.

'Escaped from the sea and justice, I ought to have felt not a little grateful to Heaven; but I was not in a situation calculated to inspire great gratitude at being saved. Without money, without friends, without credit, I saw myself reduced to subsist on charity or die of hunger. I left Ormus without knowing what would become of me, and went towards the country which is between the mountains and the Persian Sea. There I met a caravan of merchants from Hindoostan, who were setting out to take the road to Shiraz. I joined these merchants, and through the little services I rendered them I found means of subsisting. I went with them to Shiraz, where I stopped.

'The king, Shah Tahmasp, was holding his court in this town.

'One day that I was returning from the grand mosque to the caravanserai where I was lodged, I perceived an officer of the king of Persia: he was richly dressed and well-built; he looked at me very attentively, approached me and said: "O young man, from what country are you? I see you are a stranger, and I do not think you are in prosperity."

'I replied that I was from Bagdad, and that as regarded his conjecture, it was but too true. Then I related my story succinctly to him: he seemed to listen with attention and showed himself sensible to my misfortune.

'"How old are you?" he said to me.

'"I am," I replied, "in my nineteenth year."

'He ordered me to follow him. He preceded me and took the road to the king's palace, which I entered with him. He led me into a very fine apartment, where he said me:

'"What is your name?"

'I replied that I was named Hassan. He asked me several other questions, and, satisfied with my replies:

'"Hassan," he replied, "I am touched at your misfortune and I am anxious to act as a father to you. Know that I am the captain of the door of the chamber of the King of Persia. There is a vacant place in the king's chamber. I select you to fill it: you are handsome, young, and well-made. I cannot make a better choice. There are no pages of the king's chamber at this moment whom you do not surpass in appearance."

'I thanked the captain for all the kindness he showed me: he took me under his protection and had a page's dress given me. I was instructed in all my duties, and I began to acquit myself in a manner which soon attracted to me the esteem of all the officers of the king's pages and did honour to my patron.

'It was forbidden, under pain of death, to all the pages of the twelve chambers, as well as to all the officers of the palace and the soldiers of the guard, to remain at night in the gardens of the seraglio after a certain hour indicated, because the women walked here sometimes. I was quite alone there one evening, and was dreaming of my misfortunes. I was so absorbed in my reflections that I let the time prescribed for the men to retire pass. My reverie came to an end, however, and thinking that the moment for retreat could not be far off, I hastened precipitately to re-enter the palace, when a lady, at the turning of an alley, presented herself suddenly before me. She had a majestic bearing, and in spite of the darkness of the night I remarked that she possessed youth and beauty.

'"You are hurrying very much," she said to me; "what makes you run thus?"

'"I have my reasons," I replied; "if you belong to this palace, as I do not doubt, you cannot be in ignorance of them? You know it is forbidden to men to be seen in these gardens after a certain hour, and that their life is endangered if this order is disobeyed."

'"You are rather late in thinking of retiring," replied the lady, "the hour has passed; but you may thank your stars, for otherwise you would not have met me."

'"How unhappy I am!" I cried, heeding nothing but the new danger in which I saw myself placed. Why did I let myself be overtaken by the time?"

'"Do not grieve," said the lady, "your grief is an insult to me. Ought you not to be consoled already for your misfortune? Look at me, I am not ill-made; I am only eighteen, and as for my face, I flatter myself it is not disagreeable."

'"Beautiful lady, although the night partly conceals your charms from me, I see more than enough to enchant me; but consider my position and admit it is rather an unhappy one."

'"It is true," she replied, "that the danger you are in does not offer a very bright aspect to your

mind. Your destruction, however, is perhaps not so assured as you imagine: the king is a good prince who might pardon you. Who are you?

'"Madam," I replied, "I am a page."

'"Ah! indeed," she interrupted, "you reason well for a page; the grand vizir could not do better. Believe me, do not fret to-day about what may happen to-morrow. You do not know what may occur: Heaven alone knows and has, perhaps, already prepared a way out of your dilemma: let the future, then, alone, and only occupy yourself with the present. Believe me that if you knew who I am and all the honour done to you by this adventure, instead of poisoning such sweet moments by bitter reflections you would esteem yourself the happiest of men."

'The lady, by dint of persuasion, ended by driving away the fear which agitated me. The picture of the punishment which threatened me gradually faded away from my mind, and, yielding myself entirely to the flattering hopes which I had been allowed to conceive, I only thought to profit by the occasion. I embraced the lady enthusiastically; but far from lending herself to my embraces, she uttered a cry, repulsing me the while, and

immediately I saw ten or twelve women appear, who were hidden to listen to our conversation.

'It was not difficult for me to perceive then that the person who had just been so pleasant to me was laughing at me. I imagined her to be some slave of the Princess of Persia, who, for her own amusement, had wished to play the adventuress. All the other women ran promptly to her assistance, laughing heartily: they found her trembling with the fright I had caused her. "Calé-Cairi," said one of them to her, "do you still wish to play such games again?"

'"Oh! indeed no," said Calé-Cairi; "that will never do again. I am well rewarded for my curiosity."

'The slaves then began to surround and jest with me. "This page," said one, "is rather hasty; he is born for fine adventures." "If ever," said another, "I walk alone at night, I hope I may not meet a more foolish one."

'Although a page, I was very disconcerted by all their pleasantries, which they accompanied by outbursts of laughter. Had they rallied me for being too timid, I should not have been more ashamed.

'They also joked me about the hour for re-

tiring, which I had let pass; they said it was a pity I should perish, and I deserved to have my life saved, since I was so devoted to the service of the ladies. Then she whom I had heard called Calé-Cairi, addressing another, said: "It is for you, princess, to decide his fate; do you wish him to be abandoned or to be succoured?'

'"He must be saved from the danger he is in," replied the princess. "I consent to his living. So that he may ever remember this adventure, it must be made still more agreeable for him. Let us bring him into my apartment, which no man till now can boast of having seen."

'Two slaves went immediately to fetch a woman's dress and brought it to me. I put it on, and, mingling among the persons of the princess's suite, I accompanied her to her apartment, which was illumined by a large number of perfumed candles. It seemed to me as rich as that of the king: gold and silver glittered everywhere.

'On entering the chamber of Zelica-Beghume—it was thus the Princess of Persia was named—I remarked that there were in the middle, on the carpet, fifteen or twenty large squares of brocade ranged around. All the ladies threw themselves

down on them, and they obliged me to seat myself there too: then Zelica asked for refreshments. Six aged slaves, less richly dressed than those who were seated, instantly appeared; they distributed napkins amongst us, and served shortly afterwards, in a large basin of green porcelain, a salad composed of scalded milk, lemon juice, and slices of cucumber. They brought a spoon made of the beak of a bird to the princess, who first took a spoonful of salad, ate it, and immediately gave the spoon to the first slave who was seated at her right; this slave did the same thing as her mistress, so that the whole company used the same spoon all round till there was nothing left in the basin. Then the three aged slaves presented fresh water to us in crystal cups.

'After this repast the conversation became as animated as if we had drunk wine or date-brandy. Calé-Cairi, who by chance or otherwise was placed opposite to me, sometimes looked at me and smiled, and seemed to wish me to understand by her glances that she pardoned me the impetuosity I had displayed in the garden. I, on my side, cast my eyes on her from time to time, but I lowered them as soon as I saw she had hers on

me. I looked very embarrassed, try as I would to appear self-possessed. The princess and her women, who perceived it, tried to inspire me with boldness. Zelica asked me my name, and how long I had been a page. As soon as I had satisfied her curiosity, she said to me: "Well, Hassan, look less embarrassed; forget that you are in an apartment the entrance to which is forbidden to men; forget that I am Zelica; speak to us as if you were with the young town girls of Shiraz. Look at all these young persons, examine them with attention, and say frankly which is the one amongst us who pleases you most."

'The Princess of Persia, instead of reassuring me by this speech, as she imagined, only augmented my confusion. "I see, Hassan," she said to me, "that I ask of you something that pains you; you are doubtless afraid that in declaring yourself in favour of one you will displease all the others. But do not let this fear stop you; let nothing restrain you; my women are so united that you could not make them disagree. Look at us, there- fore, and tell us which you would choose as a mistress if it were permitted to you to choose."

'Although the slaves of Zelica were perfectly beautiful, and the princess herself had reason to flatter herself she would have the preference, my heart immediately decided for Calé-Cairi; but, hiding feelings which seemed insulting to Zelica, I told the princess she ought not to enter into the competition, nor dispute a heart with her slaves, since her beauty was such that, wherever she appeared, it was impossible to have eyes but for her. Saying these words, I could not help looking at Calé-Cairi in a manner for her to judge that flattery alone had dictated them. Zelica perceived it also. "Hassan," she said to me, "you are too flattering. I wish for more sincerity. I am persuaded you do not say what you think. Give me the satisfaction I ask of you; reveal your innermost soul to us; all my women beg it of you; you cannot give us greater pleasure." All the slaves pressed me; Calé-Cairi especially showed herself the most ardent in wishing me to speak, as though she had guessed she was most concerned.

'I yielded at last to their entreaties. I banished my timidity, and, addressing Zelica, "My princess," I said, "I am going to satisfy you. It would be difficult to decide who is the most beautiful lady,

but the amiable Calé-Cairi is the one for whom I feel most inclination."

'I had hardly said these words than the slaves began to laugh loudly, without the least annoyance appearing on their faces. "Are these women?" I said to myself. Zelica, instead of showing that my frankness had offended her, said to me:

'"I am very glad, Hassan, that you have given the preference to Calé-Cairi: she is my favourite, and that shows you have not bad taste. You do not know the entire worth of the person you have chosen; such as you see us, we are all ready to admit that we are not her equal."

'The princess and the slaves, with much wit, then bantered Calé-Cairi on the triumph her charms had won.

'After that Zelica had a lute brought and, putting it in Calé-Cairi's hands, "Show your lover," she said, "what you can do."

'The slave tuned the lute, and played in a way that charmed me. She accompanied it with her voice, and sang a song whose burden was that, having chosen a lovable object, it should be loved through life. In singing she turned her eyes towards me so tenderly from time to time, that, for-

getting in whose presence I was, I threw myself at her feet in a transport of love and pleasure. My actions gave rise to renewed laughter, which lasted until an aged slave came to say that day was about to break, and that if they wished to get me out of the women's apartment there was no time to lose.

'Then Zelica, as well as her women, thinking only of resting, bade me follow the old slave, who led me through several galleries, and by many windings brought me to a door of which she had the key. She opened it and I went out, and as soon as it was daylight I perceived that I was beyond the precincts of the palace.

'It was in this manner that I left the apartment of the Princess Zelica-Beghume and escaped from the new danger in which I had placed myself. I rejoined my comrades some hours after. The master of the pages at once asked me why I had slept out of the palace. I replied that one of my friends, a merchant of Shiraz, who had just left for Bassora with all his family, had kept me with him, and that we had passed the night in drinking. He believed me, and I got off with a reprimand. I was too delighted with my adventure to forget it.

I perpetually recalled its smallest details, particularly those which most flattered my vanity, that is to say, those which led me to believe that I had attracted the attention of the favourite slave of the princess.

'A week after, a eunuch came to the door of the king's chamber and said he wished to speak to me. I went to ask him what he wanted. "Are you not named Hassan?" he said. I replied in the affirmative. He then put a note in my hand and disappeared immediately. It was intimated to me that if I were inclined to remain the following night in the seraglio gardens, after the time for retiring, in the same place where I had been encountered, I should see a person who was very sensible to the preference I had shown her over all the other women of the princess.

'Although I had suspected Calé-Cairi of being well inclined towards me, I did not at all expect to receive this letter.

'Enchanted at my good fortune, I asked the Master's permission to go and see a dervish of my native land recently arrived at Meccha; this being granted me, I ran—I flew to the seraglio gardens as soon as night fell.

'If on the first occasion I had let myself be overtaken by the time, now it seemed to me very long to wait for the pleasures I promised myself. I thought the hour for retiring would never come. It came, nevertheless. I perceived a short time afterwards a lady whom I recognised by her figure and her bearing to be Calé-Cairi.

'I approached her in a transport of pleasure and joy, and, throwing myself at her feet, I remained with face to the ground, unable to say a word, so beside myself was I.

'"Rise, Hassan," she said, "I wish to know whether you love me: to persuade me of it, I want other proofs than this tender and passionate silence. Speak to me without restraint; is it possible that you think me more beautiful than all my companions—than the Princess Zelica even? Can I really believe that your eyes are more favourable to me than to her?"

'"Do not doubt it," I replied, "too amiable Calé-Cairi. When the princess and her women forced me to decide between you and them, my heart had already long declared itself for you. Since that happy night, I have not been able to turn from your image, and you would always have

been present in my mind had you never shown kindness to me."

'"I am enchanted," she replied, "at having inspired so much love in you, for, on my part, I admit I have not been able to prevent myself having a friendly feeling for you. Your youth, your goodly appearance, your quick and brilliant intelligence; and more than all that, perhaps, the preference you have shown for me over very pretty people, made you very pleasing in my eyes: the step I have taken sufficiently proves it; but, alas! my dear Hassan," she added sighing, "I do not know whether I ought to be pleased at my conquest, or whether I ought not rather to look upon it as the cause of the future unhappiness of my life."

'"Ah, madam," I said, "why, in the midst of the delight which your presence causes me, do you give way to such a gloomy presentiment?"

'"It is not," she replied, "a foolish fear which troubles our pleasure at this moment; my fears are but too well justified, and you do not know what causes my trouble: the Princess Zelica loves you, and freeing herself soon from the superb yoke under which she is bowed, she will announce your

good fortune to you. When she announces to you that you are pleasing to her, how will you receive so glorious an avowal? Will the love you have for me withstand the honour of having as your mistress the first princess in the world?"

'"Yes, charming Calé-Cairi," I interrupted at that moment, "you will triumph over Zelica. Did it please Heaven you should have a still more redoubtable rival, you would see that nothing could shake the constancy of a heart which is devoted to you. If Shah Tahmasp should have no son to succeed him, and he should despoil himself of the kingdom of Persia to give it to his son-in-law, whom it depended on me to become, I would sacrifice for you so great a fortune."

'"Ah! unhappy Hassan," cried the lady, "to what lengths does your love carry you? What dire assurance do you give me of your fidelity. You forget that I am the slave of the Princess of Persia. If you repay her kindness with ingratitude, you will draw down her anger upon us and we shall both perish. It were better I should yield you to such a powerful rival; it is the only way to save ourselves."

'"No, no," I replied abruptly, "there is another

which I in my despair would rather choose, and that is to banish myself from the court. My flight will protect you from the vengeance of Zelica, will restore your tranquillity to you; and whilst little by little you will forget the unfortunate Hassan, he will seek in the desert the end of his misfortunes."

'I was so overcome with what I was saying that the lady, sympathising with my grief, said, "Cease, Hassan, to abandon yourself to a superfluous distress; you are in error, and you seem to deserve to be undeceived. I am not a slave of the Princess Zelica—I am Zelica herself. The night that you came to my apartment I passed as Calé-Cairi and you took Calé-Cairi for me."

'At these words she called one of her women, who, issuing from behind some cypresses where she had remained hidden, came forward quickly, and I recognised the slave whom I had taken for the Princess of Persia.

'"You see, Hassan," said Zelica, "there is the real Calé-Cairi. I give her back her name and resume mine. I do not wish to disguise myself any longer, nor conceal from you the importance of the conquest you have made; realise, therefore,

all the glory of your triumph. Although you have more love than ambition, I am sure you will not hear without experiencing fresh pleasure that it is a princess who loves you."

'I did not fail to tell Zelica that I could not realise the extent of my good fortune, nor how I had deserved that she should descend from the grandeur in which she had been brought up, and seek me out in my nothingness, in order to confer on me a fate worthy of the envoy of the greatest king in the world.

'Surprised, enchanted, by the kindness of the princess, I began to indulge in expressions of gratitude; but she interrupted me. "Hassan," she said, "do not be astonished any longer at what I have done for you. Pride has little empire over women who lead enclosed lives. We follow without resistance the movements of our hearts; you are lovable, you have pleased me; that is sufficient to merit my kindness."

'We spent all the night walking about and talking, and daylight would have doubtless surprised us in the gardens, if Calé-Cairi, who was with us, had not taken care to warn us that it was time to separate; but before I quitted Zelica, she

said: "Farewell, Hassan, always think of me; we shall see each other again, and I promise to show you soon how dear you are to me." I threw myself at her feet to thank her for so flattering a promise, after which Calé-Cairi made me make the same round that I had made the first time, and then led me beyond the precincts of the seraglio.

'Loved by the august princess whom I idolised, and indulging my imagination with the charming promise she had made me, I gave myself up the next and following days to the pleasantest ideas imaginable. It might be truly said that there was a happy man upon earth, if the impatience to see Zelica again permitted me to be happy.

'I was in the position which gives most pleasure to lovers, that is to say, the moment was approaching when my love was to be returned, when an unforeseen event suddenly dispelled my proud hopes. I heard that the Princess Zelica had fallen ill, and, two days after, the rumour of her death spread through the palace, and to confirm it I saw preparations begun for the funeral. My eyes, alas! were the sad witnesses of it, and it was in this order:

'All the pages of the twelve chambers walked first, naked from head to waist; some scarred their arms to testify to their grief, others marked characters on them, and I, profiting by the occasion to mark the sincere regret, or rather the despair, I felt, tore my body, and covered myself with blood. Our officers followed us with a slow step and a grave air. They had behind them long rolls of Chinese paper, unrolled and attached to their turbans, on which were written various passages of the Alcoran, with some verses in praise of Zelica, which they sang sadly and respectfully. After them appeared the body in a coffin of sandal wood, raised on an ivory bier borne by twelve men of quality; and twenty princes related to Shah-Tahmasp held each the end of a silken cord attached to the coffin. All the women of the palace followed, uttering cries of lament, and when the body had arrived at the place of burial everyone commenced to cry, "There is no God but God!"

'I did not see the rest of the ceremony, because the excess of my grief and the blood I had lost produced a prolonged swoon. One of our officers had me carried into our room, where great care was taken of me. My body was

rubbed with an excellent balm, so that at the end of two days I felt my strength returning; but the remembrance of the princess almost drove me mad. "Oh! Zelica," I said to myself every moment, is it thus that you keep the promise you made on leaving me? Is this the mark of affection you wished to give me?" I could not console myself, and sojourn in Shiraz becoming insupportable to me, I left the court of Persia secretly three days after the obsequies of the Princess Zelica.

'Possessed with grief I walked all night without knowing where I was going or where I should go. The following morning, having stopped to rest, a young man passed near me who was extraordinarily attired. He came to me, saluted me, and presented to me a green palm which he held in his hand, and, having obliged me to accept it, he began to recite Persian verses to persuade me to give him alms. As I had nothing I could give him nothing. He thought I did not understand the Persian language; he recited some Arabic verses; but seeing that he did not succeed better one way than another, and that I did not do as he wished, he said to me: "Brother, I cannot believe that you

are wanting in charity. I believe rather that you have not the means of exercising it."

'"You are right," I replied, "I have not the smallest coin, and I do not know where to lay my head."

'"Ah! unhappy man," he cried, "what a strange condition is yours! I pity you, I wish to succour you."

'I was somewhat surprised to hear a man speak thus who had just asked alms of me, and I believed the help he offered me was nothing else but prayers and vows, when, continuing, he said: "I am one of those good fellows called fakirs. Although we live on charity we live, nevertheless, in abundance, because we know how to excite the pity of men by an air of mortification and penance. There are, indeed, fakirs who are simple enough to be what they appear, who lead so austere a life that they sometimes go ten whole days without taking the least nourishment. We are a little less rigid than those. We do not pride ourselves upon having their virtues, we merely preserve the appearance of them. Will you become one of us? I am going to seek two who are at Bost; if you are

inclined to make the fourth you have only to follow me."

'"Not very accustomed to your devotional practices, I fear to acquit myself badly——"

'"You are laughing," he interrupted. "Practices indeed! I repeat to you we are not rigid fakirs; in a word, we wear their habit only."

'Although this fakir by his words made me understand that his two fakirs and himself were three libertines, I did not refuse to join them. Beside finding myself in a deplorable state, I had not learnt amongst the pages to be scrupulous in my connections. As soon as I had told the fakir that I consented to do what he wished, he conducted me to Bost, living on the way on dates, rice, and other provisions given him in the towns and villages through which we passed. As soon as his bell and cry were heard, the good Mussulmans hastened to load him with provisions.

'We arrived in this way at the town of Bost; we entered a little house situated in the suburbs where the two other fakirs lived. They received us with open arms, and seemed charmed at my resolution to live with them. They soon initiated me into their mysteries, that is to say, they taught

me all their grimaces. When I was well instructed in the art of deceiving people, they dressed me like themselves, and required me to go into the town to present flowers and palms to the worthy people and recite verses to them. I always returned home with some pieces of silver, which enabled us to make good cheer.

'I was still too young, and was naturally too fond of pleasure, to be able to resist the example set by these fakirs. I plunged into all sorts of debauch, and thereby lost insensibly the remembrance of the Princess of Persia. I still thought of her sometimes and sighed for her; but instead of cherishing these poor remains of my grief, I spared nothing to destroy them, and I often said: "Why think of Zelica, since Zelica is no more? Were I to lament her all my life what would my tears avail?"

'I passed almost two years with these fakirs, and I should have remained there longer if the one who had persuaded me to join them, and whom I loved more than the others, had not proposed to me to travel. "Hassan," he said one day to me, "I begin to be wearied of this town. I feel a desire to travel. I have heard tell wonders of the

town of Candahar, if you wish to accompany me we will see if a faithful picture has been given me of it." I consented, impelled by curiosity to see new countries; or, rather, carried away by that superior power which forces us to act.

'We both left Bost, therefore, and after having passed through several towns without stopping, we arrived at the beautiful town of Candahar, which appeared before us enclosed by strong walls.

'We lodged in a caravanserai, where we were charitably received by reason of the habits we wore, which was about all we had to recommend us. We found all the inhabitants of the town in a state of commotion because the following day the feast of the anniversary of the king's coronation was to be celebrated. We heard that they were not less occupied at the court, everyone wishing to display his zeal for the King Firouzshah, who was beloved of the good for his equity, and feared of the bad for the rigour with which he treated them.

'As fakirs enter everywhere without anyone being able to prevent them, we went to the court the following day to see the feast, which had

nothing to charm the eyes of a man who had seen the feasts of the kings of Persia. Whilst we were attentively watching all that took place I felt myself touched on the arm. At the same time I turned my head and perceived beside me the eunuch who, in the palace of Shah Tahmasp had given me a letter from Calé-Cairi; or, rather, from Zelica.

'"My lord Hassan," he said, "I recognised you in spite of the strange garment which covers you. Although I do not seem to be mistaken, I do not know whether I ought not to mistrust the testimony of my eyes. Is it possible that I meet you here?"

'"And you," I replied, "what are you doing at Candahar? Why have you left the court of Persia? Was it, as in my case, because of the death of the Princess Zelica?"

'"That," he replied, "I cannot tell you now, but I will satisfy your curiosity fully if you will be here to-morrow at the same time. I will tell you things which will astonish you; they concern you, moreover."

'I promised him to return alone to the same place the following day, and I did not fail to keep my promise. The eunuch appeared, he came to me and said, "Let us leave this palace; let us seek a more

convenient place for conversation." We entered the town, traversed several streets, and finally we stopped at the door of a rather large house of which he had the key. We entered, I saw well-furnished apartments, beautiful foot-carpets, rich sofas, also a well-cultivated garden, in the midst of which was a basin full of lovely water and bordered with jasper.

'"Lord Hassan," said the eunuch, "do you like this house?"

'"Very much," I replied.

'"I am very glad of it," he rejoined, "for I hired it yesterday for you, just as you see it. You require slaves to wait on you. I am going to buy some for you whilst you bathe." Thus saying, he conducted me into a room where there were baths prepared.

'"In God's name," I said, "tell me why you have brought me here, and what you have to tell me."

'"You will be told," he said, "in due time. Suffice it for you to know that your destiny has greatly changed since I met you, and that I have orders to treat you as I am doing." At the same time he helped me to undress, which was soon done. I entered the bath and the eunuch went out, begging me not to be impatient.

'The mysterious treatment I was receiving gave me much food for thought, but I wearied my mind in vain in endeavouring to understand it. Schapour left me a long time in the water, and I was beginning to lose patience, when he returned, followed by four slaves, two of whom were laden with linen and clothes and the others with all sorts of provisions. "I beg pardon, my lord," he said. "I am sorry to have made you wait so long."

'The slaves immediately put their packets on the sofa and hastened to wait on me. They rubbed me with fine new linen, then they dressed me in a rich vest with a magnificent robe and a turban. "Where is all this to end?" I said to myself; "by whose order does this eunuch treat me in this manner?" I was consumed with impatience to be enlightened on the subject.

'Schapour noticed it. "I regret to see you a prey to your anxiety, but I cannot relieve you. Had I not been expressly forbidden to speak, and if betraying my duty I were to inform you of all that I know, I should not make you more tranquil. Other desires still more violent would succeed those which animate you now. You will not know till to-night what you wish to learn."

'Although the speech of the eunuch augured well for me, I remained for the rest of the day in a state of cruel suspense. I believe the anticipation of evil causes less suffering than the expectation of a great pleasure.

'Night came, however; candles were lit everywhere, and particular care was taken to light the finest apartment in the house. I was there with Schapour, who, to relieve my weariness, said every minute: "Have a little more patience, they are coming." At last we heard knocking at the door: the eunuch went to open it himself, and returned with a lady, who had no sooner lifted her veil than I recognised her to be Calé-Cairi. At sight of her my surprise was extreme, for I thought this lady was at Shiraz. "Lord Hassan," she said, "however astonished you may be to see me, you will be much more so when you hear what I have to tell you." At these words Schapour and the slaves went out and left me alone with Calé-Cairi. We both sat on the same sofa and she began thus:

'"You remember, lord Hassan, the night Zelica chose to discover herself to you, and the promise she made on leaving you cannot yet have faded from your memory.

'"The following day I asked her what resolution she had taken, and what evidence of affection she proposed giving you. She replied that she wished to make you happy, and often have secret interviews with you, whatever danger she might have to run. I will not deny that, opposed to her sentiments, I spared nothing to dispel them. I represented to her that it was an extravagant idea for a princess of her rank to think of exposing her life for a page. In a word, I combated her love strenuously, and you must forgive me, since all my arguments only served to augment her passion. When I saw that I could not persuade her, 'Madam,' I said, 'I cannot contemplate without a shudder the dangers you are going to expose yourself to, and since nothing can detach you from your lover, you must seek a means of seeing him without compromising your life or his. I know a way which would doubtless flatter your love, but I should not dare propose it to you, so delicate does it seem to me.'

'"'Speak, Calé-Cairi,' said the princess, 'whatever the means may be do not hide it from me.' 'If you employ it,' I replied, 'you must resolve to quit the court, to live as though Heaven had caused you to be born in the commonest condition of life.

You must renounce all the honours which are attached to your rank; do you love Hassan enough to make so great a sacrifice for him?'

'"'Do I love him!' she replied with a deep sigh. 'The lowliest lot with him will please me more than all the pomp which surrounds me. Tell me what I ought to do to see him unrestrainedly, and I will do it without hesitation.' 'Since it is useless to oppose you, I will yield to your wish,' I said. 'I know a herb which has a somewhat singular virtue; if you place but one leaf of it in your ear, you will fall an hour afterwards into a lethargy: you will pass for dead; your funeral will be held, and at night I shall get you out of the tomb'"

'At these words I interrupted Calé-Cairi. "Oh Heaven!" I cried, "is it possible that the princess Zelica is not dead? What has become of her?"

'"My lord," said Calé-Cairi, "she still lives, but I beg you to listen to me; you shall hear all you wish to know. My mistress," she continued, "embraced me with joy, so ingenious did this project appear to her; but, reflecting upon the difficulty of executing it on account of the ceremonies observed at funerals, she told me what she thought of it. I removed all

the difficulties, and this is how we carried out this great enterprise. Zelica complained of a head-ache and went to bed. The following day I spread the rumour that she was dangerously ill. The king's physician came, allowed himself to be deceived, and ordered remedies which were not taken. The following days the illness increased, and when I thought the time came to announce that the princess was in extremity, I put in her ear a leaf of the herb in question. I then ran to inform Shah Tahmasp that Zelica had only a few more moments to live and wished to speak with him.

'"He hastened to her side, and remarking, because of the working of the herb, that her face changed every moment, he grew sad and began to weep. 'My lord,' said his daughter to him then, 'I conjure you by the affection you have always had for me, to command that my last wishes shall be exactly carried out. I wish that after my death no other woman but Calé-Cairi shall wash my body and rub it with perfumes; I do not wish my other slaves to share this honour with her; I also ask that she may watch alone with me the first night, and that no one but she shall water my tomb with tears; I wish it to be this zealous slave who shall

pray the Prophet to save me from the assaults of the bad angels.'

'"Shah Tahmasp promised his daughter that I should render her these sad services as she desired. 'That is not all, my lord,' she said, 'I pray you to set Calé-Cairi free as soon as I am no more, and with her liberty give her presents worthy of you and of the attachment she has always had for me.'

'"'My daughter,' replied Shah Tahmasp, 'set your mind at rest with regard to everything you ask me; if I have the misfortune to lose you, I swear that your favourite slave, laden with presents, shall be able to retire where she pleases.'

'"Hardly had he finished these words than the herb produced its effect; Zelica lost consciousness, and her father, believing her to be dead, retired weeping to his apartment. He ordered that I alone should wash and perfume the body, which I did. I then wrapped it in a white cloth and put it in a coffin, after which it was borne to the place of burial, where, by order of the king, I was left alone the first night. I looked everywhere to see whether anyone were hidden to observe me, and having found no one, I drew my mistress from the coffin

and from her lethargy. I made her put on a robe which I had under mine with a veil, and we both betook ourselves to a place where Schapour awaited us. This faithful eunuch conducted the princess to a little house which he had hired, and I returned to the tomb to pass the rest of the night. I made a bundle of stuff in the form of a corpse; I covered it with the cloth which had served to envelop Zelica and enclosed it in the coffin.

'"The following morning the other slaves of the princess came to take my place, which I did not leave without making beforehand all the grimaces which usually accompany false grief. They told the king of the evidences of sorrow which I had shown, which would have prompted him to make me presents had he not already been determined to do so. He had ten thousand sequins counted out to me from his treasury, and he granted me the permission I asked of him to retire and take with me the eunuch Schapour; after which I went to find my mistress, to rejoice with her on the happy success of our strategy. The following day we sent the eunuch to the king's chambers with a note, in which I begged you to come and see me; but one of your companions said you were in-

disposed, and that you could not be spoken to. Three days after we sent him back; he learned that you were no longer in the seraglio, and that they did not know what had become of you."

'I interrupted Calé-Cairi at this juncture. "Ah! why was I not informed of your project? Why did you not let me know of it through Schapour? Ah! what pain one word would have spared me!"

'"Ah! would to Heaven," interrupted Calé-Cairi in her turn, "a mystery had not been made of it to you. Zelica would have been living with you now in some part of the world; had it depended on me you would both have been happy. Hardly had we formed our plan than I wished to acquaint you with it; but my mistress did not wish it. 'No, no,' she said, 'he must feel my loss; he will be more sensible to the pleasure of seeing me again, and his surprise will be all the more agreeable for the grief caused him by the idea of my death.'

'"I could not enjoy this refinement of affection. It seemed to me that I foresaw its sad consequences: and bitterly has Zelica repented of it. I cannot say how grieved she was at your disappearance. 'Ah! unhappy woman that I am,' she cried perpetually, 'what does it avail me to have sacrificed every-

thing to love, if Hassan is to be lost for ever?' We had you sought for everywhere. Schapour spared nothing to find you; and when we had lost hope of it we left Shiraz. We went towards the Indus, because we imagined you had perhaps wended your steps in that direction; and, stopping at all the towns which are on the banks of that river, we made enquiries for you as searching as they were vain. One day, going from one town to another, although we were with a caravan, a great band of robbers surrounded us, beat the merchants, and pillaged their merchandise. They made themselves our masters, took the gold and jewels they found with us, took us then to Candahar, and sold us to a slave merchant whom they knew.

'"This merchant had no sooner got possession of Zelica than he resolved to show her to the King of Candahar. Firouzshah was charmed with her as soon as she appeared before him; he asked her whence she came. She replied that Ormus was her birthplace, and did not reply with more truth to the other questions this prince put to her. He bought us, put us in his women's palace, and gave us the finest apartment in it."

'Calé-Cairi ceased speaking; or, rather, I inter-

rupted her. "Oh! Heaven," I cried, "ought I to rejoice at meeting Zelica? But is it finding her again to learn that a powerful king keeps her enclosed in his seraglio? If, rebellious to the love of Firouzshah, she only drags out languishing days, what grief for me to see her suffer! And if she be contented with her fate, can I be so with mine?"

'"I am delighted," said Calé-Cairi, "that your sentiments are so delicate. The princess deserves them. Although passionately beloved by the King of Candahar, she has not been able to forget you; and never was such joy as hers yesterday when Schapour told her he had met you. She was beside herself the rest of the day; she immediately ordered her eunuch to hire a furnished house, to conduct you thither to-day, and not to let you want for anything there.

'"I come from her to explain everything that I have told you, and to prepare you to see her to-morrow during the night. We shall leave the palace and come here by a little door in the garden, of which we have had a key made to use when we wish." Saying these words, the favourite slave of the Princess of Persia rose and went out,

accompanied by Schapour, to return to her mistress.

'I did nothing during the night but think of Zelica, for whom I felt all my love rekindle. Sleep could not close my eyes a moment, and the following day seemed to me a century. Finally, after having been the prey to the keenest impatience, I heard knocking at the door of the house.

'My slaves went to open it, and soon I saw my princess enter my apartment. How her presence moved me! And she, on her side, how overjoyed she was to see me! I threw myself at her feet, I held them in a long embrace, without being able to say a word. She compelled me to rise, and having made me seat myself beside her on the sofa:

'"Hassan," she said, "I thank Heaven for having brought us together. Let us hope its kindness will not stop there, and that it will remove the fresh obstacle which prevents our being together. Awaiting that happy time you will live here tranquilly and in abundance. If we do not have the pleasure of meeting without constraint, we shall at least have the consolation of being able to have news of each other every day, and to see each other secretly

sometimes. Calé-Cairi," she continued, "has related my adventures to you; tell me yours."

'I depicted to her the grief the belief in her death had caused me, and I told her that it so saddened me that I became a fakir.

'"Ah! my dear Hassan," cried Zelica, "can it be for love of me that you lived so long with such austere people? Alas! I am the cause of your having suffered much."

'If she had known the life I had led under this religious habit, she would have pitied me a little less; but I took care not to tell her of it, and only thought of paying my passionate addresses to her. How quickly flew the moments of our interview! Although it lasted three hours, we were angry with Schapour and Calé-Cairi when they warned us we must separate. "Ah! how inconsiderate are the people who do not love," we said to them. "We have only been together a moment; leave us in peace." However, had we continued talking much longer, daylight would have surprised us, and shortly afterwards the princess retired.

'In spite of the agreeable thoughts which occupied me, I did not forget the fakir with whom I had come to Candahar, and representing

to myself his uneasiness at not knowing what had become of me, I went out to look for him. I met him by chance in the street. We embraced each other.

'"My friend," I said, "I was going to your caravanserai to inform you of what had happened to me, and to set your mind at rest. I have doubtless caused you alarm."

'"Yes," he replied, "I was very troubled about you. But what a change! In what clothes do you appear before me? You seem to me to have encountered good fortune. Whilst uncertainty as to your fate was distressing me, you were apparently passing your time agreeably."

'"I admit it," I replied, "my dear friend. I will confess to you that I am a thousand times happier than you can imagine. I wish you to be a witness of my happiness and to profit by it. Leave your caravanserai and come and lodge with me."

'Thus saying I conducted him to my house. I showed him all the apartments; I found them beautiful and well-furnished. Every moment he exclaimed, "O Heaven! what has Hassan done more than others to deserve such favours from you?"

'"But, fakir," I said to him, "do you look with chagrin upon the state I am in? My prosperity would seem to afflict you."

'"No," he replied; "on the contrary, I am greatly rejoiced at it. Far from envying the happiness of my friends, I am charmed to see them in a flourishing condition."

'Saying these words, he pressed me closely in his arms, to better persuade me that he was speaking truly. I thought him sincere, and, acting in good faith with him, I gave myself over unsuspectingly to the most cowardly, the most envious, the most perfidious of men.

'"We must make merry together to-day," he said.

'At the same moment I took him by the hand and led him into a hall where my slaves had arranged a table for two.

'We both seated ourselves. Several dishes of rice of different colours were brought to us, with dates preserved in syrup. We ate of other dishes too, after which I sent one of my slaves to buy wine at a place in the town where he knew it was sold secretly. He brought back some that was excellent, and we drank of it with so little discretion

that we should not have dared appear in public. We would not have shown ourselves there with impunity. In the midst of our debauch the fakir said to me, "Tell me, Hassan, the mysterious adventure that has happened to you; you risk nothing, I am discreet, and your very best friend. You cannot doubt me without insulting me. Open yourself to me, then, and make known all your good fortune to me, so that we may rejoice at it together. Moreover I flatter myself that I am a good counsellor, and you know that such a character is not worthless."

'Heated by the wine I had drunk, and deceived by the evidence of friendship which he gave me, I yielded to his entreaties. "I am sure," I said, "you are not capable of abusing the confidence which I am going to place in you, so I wish to conceal nothing from you. When I met you do you remember that I was very sad? I had just lost at Shiraz a lady whom I loved and by whom I was beloved. I believed her dead, and yet she is still alive. I have found her again at Candahar, and to tell you the truth she is the favourite of the King Firouzshah."

'The fakir exhibited extreme astonishment at

this speech. "Hassan," he said, "you give me a charming impression of this lady; she must be marvellously endowed with beauty since the King of Candahar is enamoured of her."

'"She is an incomparable person," I replied. "However advantageously a lover may depict her to you, he could not make a flattering portrait of her. She will not fail to come here soon; you will see her. I wish you to judge of her charms with your own eyes."

'At these words the fakir embraced me with fervour, saying I should give him much pleasure if I fulfilled my promise. I gave him renewed assurances, after which we both rose from table to go to rest. One of my slaves led my friend into a room where they had prepared a bed for him.

'The next morning Schapour brought me a note from Zelica. She informed me she would come the next night to feast with me. I showed the letter to the fakir, who was infinitely delighted at it. He did nothing during the day but talk of the lady whose beauty I had praised to him, and he awaited the night with as much impatience as if he had had the same reasons as I to wish for her arrival. I made preparations to receive Zelica. I sent for

the best dishes, and for some of the excellent wine we had tested so well the day before.

'When night had come I said to the fakir, "When the lady enters my apartment you must not be here. She might think it indiscreet. Let me go and ask her for permission to present you to her as my friend. I am sure I shall obtain it."

'We soon heard knocking at the door; it was the princess. The fakir hid himself in a cabinet; I went to meet Zelica. I gave her my hand, and, having conducted her to my apartment, "My princess," I said, "I beg you to grant me a favour. The fakir with whom I came to Candahar is lodged in this house. I have given him an apartment; he is my friend. Will you allow him to join us?"

'"Hassan," she replied, "you do not think what you are asking of me. Instead of exposing me to a man's glances you should take care to shield me from them."

'"Madam," I cried, "he is a prudent and discreet fellow, whose friendship I can rely upon. I will guarantee that you will have no occasion to regret having given me the satisfaction which I ask of you."

'"I can refuse you nothing," replied Zelica, "but I have a presentiment we shall regret it."

'"Oh no, my princess," I said to her, "do not be uneasy about that. Rely on my word, and let no fear prevent your sharing the pleasure I take in seeing you."

'Saying these words, I called the fakir and presented him to Zelica. She received him very graciously to please me, and after many mutual compliments we all three sat down to table with Calé-Cairi. My comrade was a man thirty years of age; he was very intelligent; he soon made known to the ladies by his rallies and witticisms that he was not averse to pleasure, or rather that he dishonoured his habit. As soon as we had eaten of all the dishes which were served to us, wine was brought; the slaves poured it out to us in agate cups. The fakir did not long leave his empty; he had it replenished perpetually, so that by dint of drinking he was soon in a pretty state. He was not very respectful by nature, so that the wine augmented his boldness and made him lose the little restraint he had preserved till then. He was not content with shocking the modesty of the ladies by bold speeches; he threw his arms abruptly round the neck of

the Princess of Persia, and insolently snatched a kiss.

'Zelica was indignant at the boldness of the fakir, and her anger lent her strength to snatch herself from his insolent clutches. "Stop, wretch!" she said, "and do not abuse the kindness shown you in suffering you to be here. You deserve to be punished by the slaves in this house, but the consideration which I have for your friend restrains me." Thus saying, she took her veil, covered her face, and left my apartment. I ran after her, asking pardon for what had passed; I tried in vain to appease her, she was too irritated. "You now see," she said, "whether you were wrong in wishing this fakir to join us; it was not without reason that I opposed it. I shall not put my foot here again whilst he is here." At these words she retired, say what I would to stop her.

'I returned to my friend in my apartment. "Ah, what have you done?" I said to him; "to show such want of respect to the favourite of Firouz-shah! By your indiscreet behaviour you have incurred her hatred, and perhaps she will never forgive me for having let her be seen by you."

'"Don't be afraid, Hassan," he replied, "you

don't know women well if you think she is really angry; be persuaded rather that at heart she is really delighted; there is not a lady whom such outbursts displease; the anger she gave vent to is feigned. Do you know why she appeared annoyed at my boldness? It is because your eyes were witness to it. If I had been alone with her, I am sure I should have found her more human."

'At this speech, which sufficiently indicated that he was intoxicated, I ceased reproaching him. I hoped that the following day he would better listen to reason, and that he would recognise his fault. I ordered one of my slaves to conduct him to his apartment, and I remained in mine, where my reflections on what had passed did not permit me to rest quietly. The following day the fakir had, indeed, adopted another tone; he showed me how mortified he was at having caused me so much annoyance, and as a punishment for his indiscretion he had resolved to retire from Candahar. He spoke to me in a way that touched me. I wrote immediately to the princess that our fakir repented of his audacity, and very humbly begged her and me to forgive it on account of the wine which had been the cause of it.

'As I finished writing, Schapour arrived; he told me that his mistress was still very irritated; I entrusted my letter to him. He returned, and came back some hours after with an answer. Zelica informed me that she was willing to excuse the insolence of the fakir since he assured her that he repented, but on condition that he did not remain longer in my house, and that he left Candahar in twenty-four hours. I showed the note to my friend, who told me before Schapour that his sentiments were in conformity with those of the lady; that he would not dare appear before her after the bold action he had had the misfortune to commit, and that he proposed leaving Candahar that very hour. The eunuch immediately returned to the palace, and went to inform Zelica of the disposition in which he had left the fakir.

'I was enchanted to see calm succeed the storm which had alarmed me. I will admit, however, I was sorry to lose my friend, and I kept him that day. "Wait," I said, "you shall depart to-morrow I wish to rejoice with you another day; perhaps we shall never see each other again. Ah! since we must separate, let us delay at least the sad moment of our separation."

'To better celebrate our farewell I ordered a big supper; when it was ready, we sat down to table. We had already tasted several dishes, when we saw Schapour enter, bearing a gold dish in which was a curry.

'"Lord Hassan," he said to me, "I bring you a dish which has just been served at the king's supper. His majesty found it so delicious that he had it taken to his favourite, who sends it to you."

'We ate this dish, and it seemed indeed excellent. The fakir during the meal could not tire of praising my good fortune, and he said to me twenty times: "Oh, young man, what a charming fate is yours!"

'We passed the night in drinking, and as soon as it was day my friend said to me: "Now we must part." Then I went to fetch a purse full of sequins which Schapour had brought me the day before from his mistress, and, giving it to the fakir:

'"Take my purse," I said, "it may be of use to you." He thanked me; we embraced each other. He left, and after his departure I remained some time feeling sad. "Oh, too imprudent friend," I said, "it is you who are the cause of our separation; you should have been contented with seeing Zelica and enjoying so beautiful a sight."

'As I had need of repose, I threw myself upon a sofa and fell asleep. At the end of several hours I was awoke by a great noise which was heard in my house. I rose to see the cause of it, and I perceived with much alarm that it was a troop of soldiers of Firouzshah's guard.

'"Follow us," said the officer who was at their head. "We have orders to conduct you to the palace."

'"What crime have I committed?" I replied. "Of what am I accused?"

'"We do not know," replied the officer; "we only have orders to conduct you to the king, we do not know the reason. But I will tell you, to reassure you, that if you are innocent you have nothing to fear. You have to do with a just prince who does not lightly accuse persons of having committed faults; there must be convincing proofs for him to pronounce a fatal sentence. It is true that he punishes the guilty with rigour; if you are among them, I pity you."

'I was obliged to follow the officer. On the way to the seraglio I said to myself: "Firouzshah has probably discovered the understanding that I have with Zelica; but how has he learnt it?"

When we were in the courtyard of the palace I saw four beams erected; I well knew that that concerned me, and that this kind of death was the least punishment I had to expect from Firouzshah. I raised my eyes to heaven and prayed that the Princess of Persia at least might be saved.

'We entered the seraglio; the officer who conducted me led me into the king's apartment. The prince was there with his grand vizir only and the fakir whom I had thought to be already far from Candahar. As soon as I saw this treacherous friend I knew all his perfidy.

'"It is you, then," said Firouzshah, "who have secret interviews with my favourite! Oh! rogue. you must be very bold to dare to trifle with me. Speak, and reply precisely to what I have to ask you. When you arrived at Candahar were you not told that I punished criminals severely?'

'I replied in the affirmative.

'"Well," he replied, "since you were warned, why have you committed the greatest of all crimes?"

'"Sire," I said to him, "may your majesty's days endure through all the centuries; but you know that love makes bold the dove; a man possessed

by a violent passion fears nothing. I am ready to serve as a victim to your just anger, and torture me as you will, I shall not complain of your rigour if you pardon your favourite slave. Alas! she lived tranquilly in your seraglio before my arrival, and content to make a great king happy, she began to forget an unhappy lover, whom she thought never to see again. She became aware that I was in this town; her first fire became re-kindled; it is I who have snatched her from your love; it is therefore I alone whom you ought to punish."

'Whilst I was speaking thus, Zelica, whom they had gone to fetch by order of the king, entered, followed by Schapour and Calé-Cairi; and having heard my last words, she ran to throw herself at the feet of Firouzshah.

'"My lord," she said, "pardon this young man; it is upon the guilty slave who has betrayed you that your blows should fall."

'"Ah! traitors," cried the king, "let neither of you expect mercy; you shall perish. The ungrateful woman! she implores my mercy only for the bold fellow who has offended me; and he shows himself sensible only to the loss of her whom he loves; they both dare to display before my

eyes their love's passion. What insolence! Vizir," he added, turning towards his minister, "conduct them to their punishment; let them be attached to beams, and after their death let them become the prey of dogs and birds."

'"Stop! sire," I then cried; "beware of treating a king's daughter with so much ignominy. Let your jealous anger respect the august blood which flows in your favourite's veins!"

'At these words Firouzshah appeared astonished. "What prince," he said to Zelica, "is then the author of your being?"

'The princess looked proudly at me and said: "Indiscreet Hassan, why have you revealed what I would have wished to keep secret? I had in dying the consolation of knowing that they were ignorant of my rank; in making known my identity you cover me with shame. Well, Firouzshah," she continued, addressing the King of Candahar, "learn, then, who I am. The slave whom you condemn to an infamous death is the daughter of Shah Tahmasp." At the same time she related to him her whole history, without forgetting a single circumstance of it.

'After she had finished this story, which in-

creased the astonishment of the king: "That, my lord," she said, "is a secret which I had not intended to reveal to you, and which the indiscretion of my lover alone has drawn from me. After this avowal, which I do not make without extreme confusion, I pray you to order my life to be taken immediately; it is the only favour which I ask of your majesty."

'"Madam," said the king to her, "I revoke the decree of your death; I am too just not to forgive you your infidelity. What you have just told me makes me look at it differently; I cease to complain of you, and I even give you your liberty. Live for Hassan, and let the happy Hassan live for you. I also give life and liberty to Schapour and your confidant. Go, perfect lovers; go and pass the rest of your days together, and may nothing interrupt the course of your happiness. As for you, traitor," he continued, turning to the fakir, "you shall be punished for your treachery. Mean and envious-hearted man! you could not endure the happiness of your friend, you have come yourself to give him over to my vengeance. Ah, miserable fellow! it is you who shall serve as a victim to my jealousy." At these words he ordered

the grand vizir to take the fakir away, and to give him over to the executioners.

'Whilst they were taking this scoundrel to death, Zelica and I threw ourselves at the feet of the King of Candahar. We watered them with our tears in a transport of gratitude and joy, and finally we assured him that, sensible to his generous kindness, we should preserve an eternal remembrance of him. We then left his apartment with Schapour and Calé-Cairi. We took the road to the house where I had been arrested, but we found it razed to the ground; the king had ordered it to be demolished, and the soldiers whom he had charged with this order had executed it so promptly that all the materials had already been removed and carried elsewhere; not a stone remained of it, and the people had pillaged all the furniture.

'Charmed as we were to see ourselves together once more, the princess and I, although more enamoured of each other than ever, were not a little startled at this spectacle. This house was a hired furnished one, and consequently the furniture did not belong to us, but Zelica had had brought thither by Schapour an infinity of precious objects which had not been respected in the pillage. We

had little money; we began to consult the eunuch and Calé-Cairi on the steps which we had to take, and after a long deliberation we thought it best to go and lodge in a caravanserai.

'We were ready to betake ourselves thither when an officer of the king approached us. "I come," he said, "on behalf of Firouzshah, my master, to offer you a lodging. The grand vizir lends you a house of his at the gates of the city, which is far more beautiful than that which has just been razed; you will be very comfortably lodged there. I am going, if you will, to conduct you thither; kindly follow me."

'We went thither with him. We saw a fine-looking and perfectly well-built house; the interior corresponded to the outside, the whole was magnificent and in good taste. We found more than twenty slaves there, who told us that their master had just sent to order them to furnish us abundantly with everything we wanted, and to wait upon us as upon himself during all the time we chose to stay at his house.

'Two days after we received a visit from the grand vizir, who brought us, on behalf of the king, a large quantity of presents. There were

several packets of silken stuffs and Indian cloths, with twenty purses each full of gold sequins. As we felt ill at ease in a borrowed house, and the presents of the king placed us in a position to establish ourselves elsewhere, we soon joined a large caravan of merchants of Candahar, and arrived happily with them at Bagdad.

'We went to lodge in my house, where we spent the first days after our arrival in resting and recovering from the fatigue of such a long journey. After that I appeared in the town, and sought out my friends. They were somewhat astonished to see me again. "Is it possible," said they to me, "that you are still in the flesh? Your associates who returned assured us you were dead." As soon as I heard that my fellow jewel-merchants were at Bagdad, I ran to the grand vizir, threw myself at his feet, and related their perfidy to him. He sent to have them both arrested at once; he ordered me to interrogate them both in his presence.

'"Is it not true," I said to them, "that I awoke when you took me in your arms, that I asked you what you wished to do, and that without answering me you threw me into the sea through a port-hole of the vessel?"

'They replied that I had dreamt that, and that I must have thrown myself into the gulf when asleep.

'"But why," said the vizir then to them, "did you pretend not to know him at Ormus?"

'They replied that they had not seen me at Ormus.

'"But what will you say, traitors," he replied, looking at them with a threatening air, "when I show you a certificate from the cadi of Ormus which proves the contrary?"

'At these words, which the vizir pronounced to test them, my associates grew pale and were troubled.

'"You change colour," he said to them. "Well, admit your crime yourselves; spare yourselves the tortures which are in preparation to draw this confession from you."

'Then they confessed everything, and on this confession he had them imprisoned, until the caliph, whom he wished, he said, to inform of this affair, should order what kind of death he wished they should die. But they found means to evade the vigilance of their guards or to corrupt their fidelity. They escaped from prison, and hid themselves so well in Bagdad that they could not be discovered, search as the grand vizir would.

'All their goods, however, were confiscated and remained with the caliph, with the exception of a small portion which was given me to compensate me for what was stolen from me. After that I thought of nothing but living tranquilly with my princess. We passed our days in perfect unison, and I made vows to Heaven praying only that I might be left the rest of my days in the happy situation in which I found myself. Futile wishes! Can men long enjoy an agreeable fate? Is not their rest unceasingly troubled by misfortunes and annoyances.

'One evening I was returning from amusing myself with my friends. I knocked at my door; I knocked loudly. In vain, no one came to open it. I was surprised at it, and, without knowing why, it caused me a sad foreboding. I redoubled my knocks. No slave came, my astonishment increased. What must I think of this, I said to myself; is this some new misfortune come to me? At the noise I made, several neighbours came out of their houses and, as astonished as I at my servants not answering, they helped me to break in the door. We entered; we found in the courtyard and in the first hall my slaves with their throats cut. We

entered Zelica's apartment. Oh, shocking sight! I beheld Schapour and Calé-Cairi lifeless and bathed in their blood. I called my princess, she did not reply; I ran through the house, and not finding what I sought, I felt my body fainting and I fell senseless in the arms of my neighbours.

'Would that the Angel of Death had carried me away at that moment! But no, Heaven willed I should live to see all the horror of my fate. When my neighbours had recalled me to life, I asked them how it was possible that so great a carnage could have taken place in my house without their hearing the least sound. They told me they had heard nothing, and that they were not less surprised at it than I. I ran immediately to the cadi, who sent out his lieutenant with all his archers, but their inquiries were useless.

'I, like others, thought that my associates might be the cause of this tragic event, and I felt so grieved at it that I fell ill. I passed languishing days at Bagdad. I then sold my house and I went to live at Moussul with all the wealth I had. I took this course because I had a relation whom I loved very much, and who was attached to the first vizir of the King of Moussul. This relation received me

very well, and in a little time I was known to the minister, who, thinking to perceive in me a talent for business, gave me occupation. I endeavoured to do the things he entrusted to me well, and I had the good fortune to succeed. He became day by day more pleased with me; I gained his confidence little by little, and I insensibly entered into the most secret affairs of State. I soon helped him to even support its weight. Some years after, this minister died, and the king, too well favoured towards me perhaps, gave me his place. I filled it for two years to the satisfaction of the king and his people. And this monarch, to show me how satisfied he was with me as a minister, called me Atalmulc. I soon saw envy armed against me. Several great lords became my secret enemies and resolved to destroy me. To better succeed, they made me an object of suspicion to the Prince of Moussul, who, allowing himself to be influenced by their bad insinuations, asked my deposition of his father. The king did not wish to consent at first, but he could not resist the pressure put upon him by his son. I left Moussul and came to Damascus, where I soon had the honour of being presented to your majesty.

'This, sire, is the cause of the profound sadness in which I appear wrapped. The disappearance of Zelica is always present in my thoughts, and makes me insensible to pleasure. If I learnt that this princess were dead, I should perhaps lose remembrance of her, but the uncertainty of her fate makes her ever present in my memory and nourishes my grief.'

When the vizir Atalmulc had finished the story of his adventures, the king said to him: 'I am no longer surprised that you are sad. You have just cause to be so, but everyone has not, like you, lost a princess, and you are wrong in thinking that there is not a man to be found who is perfectly content. You are greatly mistaken, and without mentioning thousands of others, I am persuaded that the Prince Seyf el Mulouk, my favourite, enjoys perfect happiness.'

'I do not know, my lord,' replied Atalmulc. 'Although he appears very happy, I would not dare say he is really so.'

'That is a point,' cried the king, 'on which I wish to be assured immediately.' Saying these words, he called the captain of his guard and

ordered him to go and fetch the Prince Seyf el Mulouk. The captain of the guard did so immediately. The favourite came to the apartment of the king his master, who said to him: 'Prince, I wish to know whether you are contented with your lot?'

'Ah! my lord,' replied the favourite, 'how can your majesty put that question to me? Although a stranger, I am respected in the town of Damascus; the great lords seek to please me, others pay court to me; I am the channel through which flow all your favours. In a word, you love me; what more could be wanting to my happiness?'

'I want you to tell me the truth,' replied the king. 'Atalmulc maintains that there is no such thing as a happy man. I think to the contrary, I think you to be one; tell me whether I am mistaken and whether any secret sorrow taints with its bitterness the sweetness of the lot I prescribe for you. Speak, reveal your secret feeling to me here?'

'My lord,' then said Seyf el Mulouk, 'since your majesty orders me to reveal my soul to you, I will tell you that, in spite of all your kindness to me, in spite of the pleasures which follow upon my steps

here, I experience an uneasiness which disturbs the peace of my life. I have in my heart an undying worm, and to crown my misfortunes my trouble is without remedy.'

The King of Damascus was somewhat astonished to hear his favourite speak thus, and he imagined some princess had been taken from him too. 'Relate your history to me,' he said; 'some lady is doubtless involved in it, and I am much mistaken if your troubles are not of the same nature as those of Atalmulc.' The favourite of Bedreddin began the recital of his adventures thus:

VI

The Story of Prince Seyf el Mulouk

I HAVE already had the honour of telling your majesty that I am the son of the late Sultan of Egypt, Asem Ben Sefouan, and brother of the prince who succeeded him. One day, being in my sixteenth year I found the door of my father's treasury open. I entered, and I began to scrutinise with much attention the things which seemed rarest to me. I lingered particularly over a little box of red sandal wood, strewn with pearls, diamonds, emeralds, and topazes. It opened with a little gold key, which was in the lock. I opened it, and perceived within a ring of marvellous beauty, with a gold box which contained the portrait of a woman.

The features were so regular, the eyes so fine, her appearance so charming, that I thought at first

it was a fancy portrait. 'The works of nature are not so perfect,' I said. What honour to the brush which produced it does this do!' I admired the imagination of the painter who had been capable of forming so beautiful an idea to himself

My eyes could not detach themselves from this painting, and, what is most surprising, it inspired me with love. I thought it was perhaps the portrait of some living princess, and the more amorous I became the more I persuaded myself of it. I closed the box and put it in my pocket with the ring; then I left the treasury.

I had a confidant named Saed. He was the son of a great lord of Cairo. I loved him, and he was a few years older than me. I related my adventure to him; he asked me for the portrait and I gave it him. He took it out of the box to see whether there were not some writing at the back which could tell us what I longed passionately to know—that is to say, the name of the person portrayed.

We perceived round the box inside these words in Arabic characters: 'Bedy-Aljemal, daughter of the King Achahbal.'

This discovery charmed me; I was enchanted to learn that I was not in love with an imaginary person. I bade my confidant discover where King Achahbal reigned.

Saed asked it of the best informed people of Cairo, but no one could tell him, so that I resolved to travel, to scour the world if necessary, and not to return to Egypt until I had seen Bedy-Aljemal. I begged the sultan, my father, to permit me to go to Bagdad to see the court of the caliph and the marvels of that town of which I had heard so much. He granted me this permission. As I wished to travel incognito, I did not make a pompous exit from Cairo; my suite consisted only of Saed and some slaves whose zeal was known to me. I soon put on my finger the beautiful ring which I had taken from my father's treasury, and the whole way I talked with my confidant only of the Princess Bedy-Aljemal, whose portrait I had always in my hands. When I arrived at Bagdad and had seen all that was curious there, I asked of some wise men if they could not tell me in what part of the world were situated the States of the King Achahbal. They replied in the negative; but if I wished very much to know I had only to take the trouble to go to

Bassora and find an old man aged a hundred and seventy, named Padmanaba. This person knew everything, and would doubtless satisfy my curiosity.

I left Bagdad immediately, flew to Bassora, and inquired for the old man. His dwelling was pointed out to me. I went to him. I saw a venerable man still full of vigour, although nearly two centuries had passed over him.

'My son,' he said to me, with a laughing air, 'what can I do for you?'

'My father,' I said to him, 'I would like to know where the King Achahbal reigns. It is of the utmost importance for me to know. Some wise men of Bagdad whom I have consulted, and who have not been able to throw any light upon it, have assured me that you would tell me the name of and the road to the Kingdom of Achahbal.'

'My son,' replied the old man, 'the wise men who have sent you to me think me less ignorant than I am. I do not know exactly where the States of Achahbal are, I only remember to have heard some traveller speak of them. This king reigns, I believe, in a neighbouring island to that

of Serendib, but it is only a conjecture, and I am perhaps in error.'

I thanked Padmanaba for having at least indicated a spot where I might hope to be informed of what I wished to know. I formed the resolution to go to the island of Serendib. I embarked with Saed and my slaves on the Gulf of Bassora in a merchant vessel which was going to Surat. From Surat we went to Goa, where we learnt on arrival that a vessel was going to sail in a few days and take the direction of the island of Serendib. We profited by the occasion.

We left Goa with a favourable wind, which took us far on our way the first day; but the second day the wind changed, and towards evening so violent a tempest arose that the sailors, seeing our destruction to be inevitable, abandoned the vessel to the mercy of the wind and sea. Sometimes the waves, opening as if to engulf us, presented frightful abysses to our frightened eyes, and sometimes rising they lifted us to the clouds. The vessel soon filling, we took to the boats. I threw myself into one with Saed. Hardly had we left the vessel than it foundered with a terrible sound, and we lost sight of our companions.

Having drifted all night, we saw at daybreak a little island. We landed on it. Trees, laden with very fine fruit hanging to the ground, first met our view, which rejoiced us all the more that we began to feel very hungry. We picked and ate of them, and found them excellent. When we had taken a little refreshment, we fastened our boat and advanced further into the island. I have never seen a more delightful spot: sandal and aloe woods grew there; there were springs of fresh water, and all sorts of fruits, as well as the most beautiful flowers.

What surprised us most was that this island, although so pleasant to look upon, seemed to be deserted.

'Whence comes it,' I said to Saed, 'that this island is not inhabited? We are not the first to visit it; others before us have doubtless discovered it. Why is it abandoned?'

'My prince,' replied my confidant, 'since no one lives here, it is a sure proof that no one can live here; there is something about it which renders it uninhabitable.' Alas! when the unfortunate Saed spoke thus, he little knew with what truth he was speaking.

We spent the day in rejoicing, and when night fell we stretched ourselves on the grass, which was sprinkled with a thousand sweet-smelling flowers. We slept deliciously; but on awaking I was very astonished to find myself alone. I called Saed repeatedly. As he did not reply I rose to seek him, and, after having searched a part of the island, I returned to the same place where I had spent the night, thinking he might perhaps be there. I awaited him in vain the whole day and even the following night; then, despairing of seeing him again, I made the air resound with cries and groans. 'Ah! my dear Saed,' I cried every minute, 'what has become of you? Whilst you were with me you helped me to bear the burden of my misfortune; you relieved my troubles in sharing them; by what misfortune or by what enchantment have you been carried off from me? What barbarous power has separated us? It would have been sweeter to die with you than to live quite alone.'

I could not console myself for the loss of my confidant; and what troubled me was that I could not think what could have happened to him. I was in despair and resolved to perish also on that

island. I said to myself, 'I will scour it thoroughly; I will find either Saed or death.' I walked towards a wood that I saw, and when I had arrived there, I discovered in the middle a very well-built castle, surrounded by a large moat full of water, the drawbridge of which was let down. I entered a large courtyard paved with white marble, and advanced towards the door of a fine block of buildings. It was made of aloe-wood; several figures of birds were represented in relief upon it, and a great padlock of steel, made in the form of a lion, kept it closed. The key was in the padlock; I took hold of it to turn it; the padlock broke like a piece of glass, and the door opened more of itself than from the effort I made to open it, which caused me extreme surprise. I found a staircase of black marble. I ascended, and first entered a great hall ornamented with a gold and silken tapestry with sofas of brocade. From there I entered a room richly furnished, but what I looked at with most attention was a perfectly beautiful young lady. She was reclining on a large sofa, her head resting on a cushion, richly dressed, and beside her was a little jasper table. As her eyes were closed, and I had reason to doubt

her being alive, I approached her gently and perceived that she breathed.

I remained for some moments in contemplation of her. She seemed charming to me, and I should have become enamoured of her had I not been so absorbed in Bedy-Aljemal. I was extremely desirous of knowing why I found in a deserted island a young lady alone in a castle where I saw no one. I sincerely hoped she would wake, but she slept so soundly I did not dare disturb her rest. I left the castle, resolved to return some hours later. I walked about the island, and saw with alarm a great number of animals as large as tigers, and formed something like ants. I should have taken them for cruel and ferocious beasts had they not fled at sight of me. I saw other wild animals who seemed to fear me, although they had an alarmingly ferocious appearance. After having eaten several fruits whose beauty charmed me, and having walked for some time, I returned to the castle, where the lady was still asleep. I could no longer resist the desire I had to speak to her. I made a noise in the room and coughed to awake her. As she did not awake, I approached her and touched her arm, but without effect. 'There is

some enchantment here,' I then said to myself; 'some talisman keeps this lady asleep, and if this is the case it is not possible to awake her from this slumber.' I despaired of succeeding, when I perceived on the jasper table of which I have spoken several graven characters; I thought this graving might hold the secret. I was about to study the table, but I had hardly touched it when the lady gave a deep sigh and awoke.

If I had been surprised to find so beautiful a person in this castle, she was not less astonished to see me. 'Ah! young man,' she said to me, 'how did you get in here? What have you done to surmount all the obstacles which should have prevented your entering this castle, and which are beyond the reach of human power? I cannot believe you to be a man. You are doubtless the prophet Elias?'

'No, madam,' I said to her, 'I am only a simple man, and I can assure you I have come here without any difficulty. The door of this castle opened as soon as I had touched the key. I mounted to this apartment without any power resisting me. I have not awakened you with ease; that is what I found most difficult.'

'I cannot believe what you tell me,' replied the lady. 'I am so persuaded that it is impossible to men to do what you have done, that I do not believe, whatever you may say, that you are merely a man.'

'Madam,' I said, 'I am perhaps something more than an ordinary man. A sovereign is the author of my being, but I am only a man for all that. I have much more reason to think that you are a superior being to myself.'

'No,' she replied, 'I am, like you, of the race of Adam. But tell me why you have left your father's court, and how you came to this island.'

I then satisfied her curiosity. I ingenuously admitted that I had become enamoured of Bedy-Aljemal, daughter of the king Achahbal, on seeing her portrait, which I showed her. The lady took the portrait, looked at it very attentively, and said; 'I have heard speak of the King Achahbal. He reigns in a neighbouring island to Serendib. If his daughter is as beautiful as her portrait, she indeed deserves that you should love her ardently, but one must not trust in the portraits which are taken of princesses; they are usually painted beautiful. Finish telling me your his-

tory,' she added; 'after that I will relate mine to you.'

I gave her a long and detailed account of all my adventures, and then I begged her to relate hers to me. She began thus:

'I am the only daughter of the King of Serendib. One day as I was with my women in a castle of my father's near the town of Serendib, the fancy took me to bathe in a white marble basin which was in the garden. I was undressed, and entered the basin with my favourite slave. We had hardly entered the water than a wind arose. A whirlwind of dust formed in the air above us, and from the midst of this whirlwind there suddenly flew a great bird who pounced on me, took me in his claws, carried me off and brought me to this castle, where, immediately changing its shape, it appeared before me in the form of a young genie. "Princess," he said to me, "I am one of the most considerable genii in the world. As I was passing the island of Serendib to-day, I saw you in your bath. You charmed me. 'There is a beautiful princess,' I said to myself, 'it would be a pity she should make the happiness of a son of Adam; she deserves the attachment of a genie. I must carry

her off and transport her to a desert island.' So, princess, forget the king, your father, and think only of responding to my love. You shall want for nothing in this castle. I will take care to provide you with everything you need."

'Whilst the genie was speaking thus to me, I only wept and lamented. "Unfortunate Malika," I said to myself, "is this the fate which was reserved for you? Has the king, my father, brought me up with so much care only to have the sorrow to lose me so miserably? Alas! he does not know what has become of me, and I fear my loss will be fatal to him." "No, no," said the genie to me, "your father will not succumb to his grief; and as for you, my princess, I trust you will yield to the evidences of affection which I propose to give you." "Do not flatter yourself," I said, "with this false hope. I shall have all my life a mortal aversion to the man who has carried me off." "You will change your sentiment," he replied; "you will accustom yourself to me; time will produce this effect." "It will not work this miracle," I interrupted with bitterness, "it will rather increase the hatred that I feel for you." The genie, instead of appearing offended, smiled, and, persuaded that I should

accustom myself by degrees to listen to him, he spared nothing to please me. He went, I know not where, to get magnificent clothes which he brought me. He did his best to inspire in me an inclination for him; but, perceiving that far from making any progress in my heart, he became daily more odious to me, he finally lost patience, and resolved to revenge himself for my contempt. He threw me into a magic sleep; he stretched me on the sofa in the attitude in which you have found me, and put beside me this marble table on which he had traced talismanic characters to keep me in a deep sleep through the centuries. He also made two other talismans; one to make this castle invisible, the other to prevent the door being opened. Then he left me in this apartment and quitted the castle. He returns hither from time to time. He wakes me up and asks me whether I wish at last to become sensible to his passion, and as I persist in refusing him, he plunges me anew in the unconsciousness which he has invented for my punishment.

'Nevertheless, my lord,' continued the daughter of the King of Serendib, 'you have awakened me, you have opened the door of this castle which has

not remained invisible to you. Have I not reason to doubt your being a man? I will even tell you that it is surprising that you still live; for I have heard the genie say that the wild beasts devour all those who wish to stop in this island, and that it is on that account deserted.'

Whilst the princess Malika was speaking thus, we heard a great noise in the castle. She ceased speaking in order to hear better, and soon terrible cries met our ears.

'Great Heaven!' then said the princess, 'we are lost. It is the genie; I recognise him by his voice. You will perish; nothing can save you from his fury. Ah! unhappy prince; what fatality has brought you to this castle?'

I thought my death inevitable. The genie entered looking furious. He had a steel club in his hand; his body was enormous. He shuddered at the sight of me; but instead of giving me a blow on the head, or adopting a threatening tone, he approached me trembling, threw himself at my feet, and spoke thus:

'Oh! prince, son of a king, you have only to command me as you please; I am prepared to obey you.'

This speech surprised me. I could not understand why this genie was so grovelling to me, and spoke as a slave. But my surprise vanished when, continuing to speak to me, he said :

'The ring which you have on your finger is the seal of Solomon ; whoever possesses it cannot perish from accident. He can cross the most stormy seas in a simple skiff without fearing that the waves will swallow him up. The most ferocious beasts cannot hurt him, and he has a sovereign power over genii. Talismans and all charms yield to his marvellous seal.'

'It is then by virtue of this ring that I still live,' I said to the genie.

'Yes, my lord,' he replied, 'it is that ring which has saved you from the beasts which are on this island.'

'Tell me,' I said to him, 'if you know what has become of the companion I had on arriving ?'

'I know the present and the past,' replied the genie, 'and I will tell you that your comrade has been eaten by the ants, who devoured him at night at your side. Those sort of ants are in great numbers and make this island uninhabitable. They do not prevent, however, the neighbouring

peoples, and above all the inhabitants of the Maldives, coming here every year to cut sandal-wood; but they do not carry it away without difficulty; they come here during the summer; they have on board their vessels very swift horses, which they disembark, and on which they mount; they gallop in whatever direction they see sandal-wood, and as soon as they see the ants approaching they throw them great pieces of meat with which they are provided for the purpose. Whilst the ants are occupied in eating these pieces of meat, the men mark the trees they wish to cut, after which they return. They come back in the winter and cut the trees without fear of the ants, who do not show themselves at this season.'

I could not hear the strange fate of Saed without feeling grieved. Then I asked the genie where the dominion of the king Achahbal was and if the princess Bedy-Aljemal his daughter still lived.

'My lord,' he replied, 'there is in these seas an island where there reigns a king named Achahbal, but he has no daughter. The princess Bedy-Aljemal of whom you speak, was indeed the daughter of a king called Achahbal, who lived in the time of Solomon.'

'What!' I replied, 'Bedy-Aljemal lives no longer?'

'No,' he replied, 'she was a wife of the great Prophet.'

I was very mortified to hear that I loved some one whose life was long over. 'Oh! madman that I am!' I cried, 'why did I not ask the sultan, my father, whose portrait it was I found in his treasury? He would have told me what I have just heard. What trouble and anxiety I should have spared myself! I should have nipped my love in the bud. It would perhaps not have gained such control over me. I should not have left Cairo; Saed would be still living. Must his death be then the sole outcome of my chimerical sentiments? All that consoles me, beautiful princess,' I continued, turning to Malika, 'is having been able to be useful to you: thanks to my ring, I am in the position to give you back to the king your father.' At the same time I addressed the genie: 'Since I am happy enough,' I said, 'to be the possessor of the seal of Solomon, since I have the right to command genii, obey me. I order you to transport me immediately with the princess Malika, to the kingdom of Serendib, to the gates of the capital.'

'I am going to obey you, my lord,' replied the genie, 'however unhappy the loss of the princess may make me.'

'It is very fortunate for you,' I replied, 'that I content myself with only exacting from you that you should bear us both to the island of Serendib; you deserve, for having carried off Malika, that I should punish you to the full extent of the power which the seal of the Prophet gives me over rebel genii.'

The genie replied nothing; he prepared immediately to do what I had ordered him: he took us in his arms, the princess and myself, and bore us to the gates of Serendib. 'Is that all,' then said the genie to me, 'that you wish me to do? Have you nothing further to command me?' I replied in the negative, and he immediately disappeared.

We went to lodge at the first caravanserai on entering the town, and there we deliberated whether we would write to the court or whether I should go myself to inform the king of the arrival of the princess. We decided on the latter course. I betook myself to the palace, which seemed to me a singular structure. It was built on a thousand columns of marble, and the ascent to it was by a

staircase of three hundred steps of beautiful stone. I passed a guard in the first hall; an officer approached me, asked me whether I had any business at the court, or whether curiosity alone brought me thither. I replied that I wished to speak to the king on an important matter. The officer led me to the grand vizir, who presented me to the king, his master.

'Young man,' said the monarch to me, 'of what country are you, and what do you come to Serendib for?'

'Sire,' I replied, 'Egypt was my birth-place. I have been long absent from my father, and I have experienced all sorts of misfortunes.' Hardly had I said these words than the king, who was a kind old man, began to weep.

'Alas!' he said to me, 'I am no happier than you. I have lost my only daughter, in a manner which increases my grief at not seeing her again.'

'My lord,' I replied, 'I have come to this palace only to give you news of this princess.'

'Ah! what news,' he cried, 'can you give me of her? You have come to announce her death to me? You have doubtless been the witness of her sad end?'

'No, no,' I replied, 'she still lives, and you will see her to-day.'

'Ah! where have you found her?' said the king; 'where was she hidden?'

Then I related all my adventures to him. I dilated particularly on that of the castle and the genie, which he listened to with all the more attention that he was himself interested in it. As soon as I had finished he embraced me.

'Prince,' he said to me, for I had discovered my birth to him in relating my history, 'what do I not owe to you? I love my daughter dearly: I did not hope to see her again. You have been the cause of my finding her. How can I acquit myself towards you? Let us go together,' he continued; 'let us go to the caravanserai where you have left her, I am burning with impatience to embrace my dear Malika.'

Saying these words, he gave the order to his vizir to have a litter prepared, which was promptly executed.

The king then made me enter the litter with him, and followed by several officers on horseback we went to the caravanserai where Malika awaited me impatiently. No words can express the mutual

joy which the King of Serendib and the princess his daughter felt on seeing each other again. After their first transport the monarch wished Malika herself to give a detailed account of her being carried off and her rescue, which she did in a way that gave him much satisfaction. He thought how happily she had preserved her life from the power of the genie, and declared that he could not carry his gratitude to her liberator too far. He seemed charmed with my bearing and my courage.

We all returned to the palace, where the king gave me a magnificent apartment. He ordered public prayers to return thanks to Heaven for the return of the princess. The inhabitants celebrated it with endless rejoicing. There was a magnificent feast at the court; all the nobility of the island were invited.

The King of Serendib showed me every attention; he took me hunting with him: I joined in all his pleasure parties. He evinced such friendship for me that he said to me one day: 'O my son, it is time to reveal to you a plan I have formed. You have brought me back my daughter. You have consoled an afflicted father. I wish to

acquit myself towards you. Be my son-in-law and the inheritor of my crown.'

I thanked the king for his kindness, and begged him not to take it ill if I refused the honour he wished to do me. I told him the reasons which had compelled me to leave Cairo. I confessed to him that I could not detach myself from the image of Bedy-Aljemal, nor cease to nourish a futile passion. 'Would you,' I added, 'give your daughter to a man whose heart she cannot possess? Ah! my lord, the Princess Malika deserves a happier fate.'

'How can I,' replied the king, 'recognise the service you have done me?'

'Sire,' I replied, 'I am sufficiently rewarded for it. The reception your majesty has given me—the pleasure alone of having delivered the Princess of Serendib from the hands of the genie who had carried her off, is a sufficient reward for me. All that I ask of your gratitude is a vessel to take me to Bassora.'

The king did as I wished; he ordered a vessel to be filled with provisions and to be held ready to depart when I thought convenient. He kept me, however, some time at his court, and he told me

every day that he was sorry that I did not wish to remain at Serendib. Finally the day of my departure arrived. I took leave of the king and the princess, who overwhelmed me with civilities, and I embarked.

We experienced several storms on the way, severe enough to have caused our shipwreck, but the virtue of my ring prevented our being submerged. So, after a long voyage, I arrived happily at Bassora, whence I went to grand Cairo with a caravan of Egyptian merchants.

I found many changes had taken place at the court: my father lived no more, and my brother was on the throne. The new sultan received me at first as a man sensible to the bonds which united us; he assured me he was glad to see me again; he told me that a few days after my departure, my father, being in his treasury, had opened by chance the little coffer which contained the seal of Solomon and the portrait of Bedy-Aljemal; that not seeing them he had suspected me of having taken them. I confessed everything to my brother, and placed the ring in his hands.

He seemed touched at my misfortune, and marvelled at the strangeness of my adventures; he

pitied me, and I felt that his sympathy relieved my trouble. All the sensibility that he evinced was, however, only perfidy. The very day of my arrival he had me enclosed in a tower, where he sent at night an officer who had orders to take my life; but this officer had pity on me, and said: 'Prince, the sultan, your brother, has ordered me to assassinate you; he fears lest a desire to reign may possess you and incite you to make trouble in the state; he thinks your death necessary to his safety. Happily for you he has addressed himself to me, he imagines that I shall execute his barbarous order and he expects to see me return covered with your blood. Ah! rather may my hand shed my own! Escape, prince; the door of your prison is open to you, profit by the darkness of the night; leave Cairo, fly, and do not stop till you are in safety.'

After having thanked this generous officer as he deserved, I took flight, and abandoning myself to Providence, I hastened to leave my brother's states. I had the good fortune to arrive in yours, my lord, and to find a safe refuge at your court.

The Prince Seyf el Mulouk having finished the

story of his adventures, said to the King of Damascus: 'That, my lord, is what your majesty has wished to know; judge now whether I am perfectly happy. I am more than ever absorbed in Bedy-Aljemal. It is in vain that I constantly represent to myself that it is extravagant on my part to be enamoured of a lady who is no longer alive; it is impossible to rid myself of her image, it reigns always in my heart.'

Bedreddin could not understand so singular a love; he asked his favourite if he still had the portrait of Bedy-Aljemal.

'Yes, my lord,' replied Seyf el Mulouk, 'and I always carry it with me.' Thus saying he took it from his pocket and showed it to the king.

The monarch admired it. 'The daughter of Achahbal was,' he said, 'a charming princess. I approve of the love that Solomon had for her, but your passion seems to me very extravagant.'

'Sire,' then said the Sad Vizir, 'your majesty can judge by the history of Prince Seyf el Mulouk that all men have their troubles, and that they are not born to be perfectly happy on earth.'

I cannot believe what you tell me,' replied the king. 'I have a better opinion of human nature,

and I am persuaded that there are people whose peace is disturbed by no trouble.'

The King of Damascus, wishing to show his vizir that there were men very contented with their lot, said to his favourite: 'Go and walk in the town, pass by the artisans' shops, and later on bring me the one who seems gayest to you.'

Seyf el Mulouk obeyed, and returned to Bedreddin some hours after.

'Well,' said the monarch, 'have you done what I ordered you?'

'Yes, sire,' replied the favourite; 'I passed by several shops, I saw all sorts of artisans who were singing at their work, and who seemed to me very content with their fate. I remarked amongst others a young weaver named Malek, who was laughing heartily with his neighbours. I stopped to speak to him. "Friend," I said to him, "you seem very gay."

'"It is my nature," he replied. "I never experience melancholy."

'I asked the neighbours whether it were true that he had such a pleasant nature; they all told me that he did nothing but laugh from morning to night. Then I told him to follow me, and I brought

him to the palace. He is in your apartment, do you wish me to introduce him into your presence?'

'Let him enter,' said the king. 'I must speak to him here.'

Seyf el Mulouk then left Bedreddin's cabinet and returned immediately, followed by a young man of pleasant appearance, whom he presented to the king. The weaver prostrated himself before the monarch, who said: 'Rise, Malek, and confess frankly whether you are as contented as you seem to be. They say you do nothing but laugh and sing every day whilst at your work; you pass for the happiest of my subjects, and there is occasion to think that you are so indeed. Tell me whether they judge ill of you and whether you are satisfied with your condition; it is a matter which it concerns me to know, and I demand of you to speak without reserve.'

'Great king,' replied the weaver, after having risen, 'may the days of your majesty endure for ever, and be showered with pleasure unmixed with sorrow. Dispense me from satisfying your curious desires. If it is forbidden to lie to kings, it must also be admitted that there are truths which one dares not reveal. I can only tell you that they

have a false opinion of me. In spite of my singing and laughing, I am perhaps the most unhappy of men. Content yourself with this confession, sire, and do not oblige me to detail my misfortunes to you.'

'Why,' replied Bedreddin, 'do you fear to relate your adventures to me? Is it because they do you no credit?'

'They would do honour to the greatest prince,' replied the weaver, 'but I have resolved to keep them secret.'

'Malek,' said the king, 'you arouse my curiosity, and I order you to satisfy it.' The weaver did not dare reply to these words, and began the history of his life thus:

'I am the only son of a rich merchant of Surat. Shortly after his death I dissipated the greater part of the wealth he had left me. I was consuming the rest with my friends, when a stranger who was passing Surat to go to the island of Serendib happened by chance to be at my table.

'The conversation turned on travelling. Some dwelt upon the utility and pleasure of it, and others

dilated upon its dangers. Some persons of the company who had travelled related their travels to us. The curious things they said they had seen secretly excited me to travel, and the dangers they said they had run prevented me from coming to a resolution.

'After I had heard them all I said, "One cannot hear of the pleasure which travelling through the world gives without feeling extremely desirous to travel, but the perils to which a traveller exposes himself take from me the desire for foreign countries. If it were possible," I added, smiling, "to go from one end of the earth to the other without having unpleasant encounters on the road, I would leave Surat to-morrow."

'At these words, which made all the company laugh, the stranger said to me, "My lord Malek, if you wish to travel and the danger of encountering robbers alone prevents you from determining on it, I will teach you, if you wish, how to travel with impunity from kingdom to kingdom." I thought he was joking, but after the repast he took me aside and told me that the following morning he would come to my house and show me something rather singular.

'He came, and said to me, "I wish to keep my word to you, but you will not see the effect of my promise for a few days, for what I have to show is a work which is not made nowadays. Send one of your slaves for a carpenter, and let them return both laden with planks." That was immediately done.

'When the carpenter and the slave had arrived, the stranger told the former to make a coffer six feet long and four wide. The workman immediately set to work. The stranger did not remain idle either; he made various parts of the machine, such as bolts and springs. They both worked all day, after which the carpenter was sent away. The stranger spent the following day in fixing the springs and completing the work.

'The third day, the coffer being finished, it was covered with a Persian carpet and it was carried into the country, whither I went with the stranger, who said to me, "Send away your slaves and let us remain here alone. I do not like to have other persons beside yourself as a witness of what I am going to do." I ordered my slaves to return home and remained alone with this stranger.

'I was very curious to know what he would do

with this machine, when he entered it; at the same time the coffer rose from the ground and flew through the air at an incredible speed. In a moment he was far from me, and a moment after he descended at my feet. I cannot say how astonished I was at this marvel.

'"You see," said the stranger on leaving the machine, "a rather pleasant carriage, and you must be persuaded that travelling thus there is no fear of being robbed on the road. This is the means I wished to give you of travelling with security. I make you a present of this coffer; you will make use of it if some day the desire takes you to travel in foreign countries. Do not imagine," he continued, "that there is any magic in what you have seen; it is not at all by means of cabalistic words nor by virtue of a talisman that this coffer rises in the air; its movement is produced by the ingenious art which teaches moving forces. I am perfected in mechanics, and I know how to make other machines as surprising as this one."

'I thanked the stranger for so rare a present and I gave him out of gratitude a purse full of sequins.

'"Teach me," I said, "what I must do to put this coffer in movement."

'"You shall soon know that," he replied. At these words he made me enter the machine with him, then he touched a spring and we were immediately lifted into the air; then he showed me what I must do to steer it straight. "Turning this bolt," he said, "you will go to the right, and turning this one you will go to the left. Touching this spring you will ascend, touching that you will descend."

'I wished to try it myself. I turned the bolts and touched the springs; the coffer, obeying my hand, went as I pleased, and I hastened or slackened its pace as I wished. After making several tours in the clouds we took our flight towards my house, and descended in my garden with ease because we had removed the carpet which covered the machine, in which were several holes, as much for air as for seeing.

'We were home before my slaves, who were not a little astonished at seeing us back again. I had the coffer enclosed in my apartment, where I guarded it with more care than a treasure, and the

stranger went away as pleased with me as I was with him.

'I continued amusing myself with my friends until I had finished devouring my patrimony. I even began to borrow, so that I insensibly found myself burdened with debts. As soon as it was known in Surat that I was ruined I lost my credit. No one wished to lend to me any longer, and my creditors, impatient to recover their money, summoned me to repay it. Seeing myself without resources, and consequently exposed to troubles and insults, I had recourse to my coffer. I dragged it one night from my apartment into my courtyard. I shut myself up in it with some provisions and the little money that remained to me. I touched the spring which made the machine ascend, then turning one of the bolts I left Surat and my creditors without fear of pursuit.

'I made the coffer fly as quick as possible during the night and surpassed the wind in swiftness. At daybreak I looked through a hole to observe where I was. I perceived only mountainous precipices an arid country, and a frightful desert. Wherever I looked I saw no trace of a habitation. I continued to go through the air all the day and the night

following. The following day I found myself above a very thick wood, near which was a rather beautiful town, situated in a vast plain.

'I stopped to look at the town as well as at a magnificent palace which appeared before my eyes at the extremity of the plain. I wished ardently to know where I was, and I was thinking how I could satisfy my curiosity when I saw a peasant tilling the ground. I descended into the wood, left my coffer there, and advanced towards the labourer, of whom I asked the name of this town.

'"Young man," he replied, "it is easy to see that you are a stranger, since you do not know that this town is called Gazna. The just and brave King Bahaman lives there."

'"And who lives," I said, "in the palace which we see at the end of the plain?"

'"The King of Gazna," he replied, "has had it built to enclose the Princess Schirina his daughter, whose horoscope foretells that she will be deceived by a man. Bahaman, to make this prediction vain, has had this palace of marble built, surrounded by deep ditches of water. The door is of Chinese steel, and although the king has the key, there is a numerous guard which watches day and night to

defend its entrance from all men. The king goes once a week to see the princess his daughter, then he returns to Gazna. Schirina has for sole companions a governess and some women slaves."

'I thanked the peasant for having told me all these things, and turned my steps towards the town. As I was just reaching it I heard a great noise, and soon I saw several magnificently dressed cavaliers appear, all mounted on very fine horses which were richly caparisoned.

'I perceived in the midst of this superb cavalcade a man wearing on his head a gold crown, whose clothes were strewn with diamonds. I gathered that it was the King of Gazna, who was on his way to see the princess his daughter, and I ascertained in the town that I was not wrong in my conjecture.

'After having explored the town and satisfied my curiosity a little, I remembered my coffer, and although I had left it in a spot which I thought safe, I became uneasy. I left Gazna and my mind was not at rest until I arrived where I had left it. Then I recovered my tranquillity, I ate with much appetite what remained of my provisions, and, as night fell immediately, I resolved to pass it in the

wood. I hoped deep sleep would not delay in overcoming me, for my debts, as well as the plight I was in, caused me some anxiety. I could not sleep, however. What the peasant had told me of the Princess Schirina was constantly in my thoughts. "Is it possible," I cried, "that Bahaman is alarmed at a frivolous prediction? Is it necessary to have a palace built to enclose his daughter. Would she not have been secure in his? On the other hand, if the astrologers indeed pierce the darkness of the future, if they read in the stars future events, it is useless to wish to elude their predictions, they must of necessity take place. All the precautions that human prudence can take cannot prevent a misfortune traced in the stars from descending upon our heads. Since the Princess of Gazna is destined to have a weakness for a man, it is in vain they try to protect her from it." By dint of occupying myself with Schirina, whom I depicted as more beautiful than all the ladies I had seen—and I had seen at Surat and at Goa a good number of rather beautiful women, who had contributed not a little to my ruin—the desire seized me to try my fortune.

'"I must," I said to myself, "transport myself on

to the roof of the princess's palace, and try to introduce myself into her apartment. I shall perhaps have the good fortune to please her. Perhaps I am the mortal whose audacity the astrologers have seen written in the skies.

'I was young and consequently hot-headed, I was not wanting in courage; I formed this bold resolution and executed it at once. I rose in the air and guided my coffer in the direction of the palace. The night was as dark as could be desired. I passed unperceived above the heads of the soldiers, who, dispersed around the moat, kept vigilant guard. I descended on the roof near a place where I saw a light. I left my coffer and slipped through a window open to the freshness of the night into an apartment ornamented with rich furniture, where, on a brocade sofa, slept the Princess Schirina, whose beauty seemed to me dazzling. I found her beyond anything I had conceived. I approached to contemplate her, but I could not look unmoved on so much charm. I fell on my knees before her, and kissed one of her beautiful hands. She awoke instantly, and perceiving a man in an attitude calculated to alarm her, she uttered a cry which soon brought to

her her governess, who slept in a neighbouring room.

'"Mahpakar," said the princess, "come to my aid. Here is a man! How could he get into my apartment? Are you the accomplice of his crime?"

'"Who? I?" replied the governess. "What an insulting suspicion! I am not less astonished than you to see this bold young fellow here; besides, had I wished to favour his audacity, how should I have deceived the vigilance of the guard which surrounds this castle? You know, moreover, that there are twenty doors of steel to open before reaching this room, that the royal seal is on each lock, and that the king your father has the keys. I do not know how this young man has been able to surmount all these difficulties."

'Whilst the governess was speaking thus, I was thinking what I should say to them. It occurred to me to persuade them that I was the Prophet Mahomet.

'"Beautiful princess," I said to Schirina, "do not be surprised, nor Mahpakar either, at seeing me appear here. I am not one of those lovers prodigal in gold and every kind of artifice in order to gain their desires. I feel no desire that your virtue need take alarm at; far from me be all

criminal thought. I am the Prophet Mahomet. I could not without pity see you condemned to pass your days in prison, and I come to offer you my help in protecting you from the prediction which alarms Bahaman, your father. Henceforth let your mind be at rest as regards your lot, which cannot be otherwise than full of glory and of happiness, since you will be the spouse of Mahomet. As soon as the news of your marriage has spread through the world, all the kings will fear the father-in-law of the great Prophet, and all the princesses will envy your fate!"

'Schirina and her governess looked at each other at this speech, as if to consult as to what they should think of it. I had occasion to fear, I admit, that it would meet with little credulity from them, but women willingly believe in the marvellous. Mahpakar and her mistress believed in my fable; they believed me to be Mahomet, and I abused their credulity. After having persuaded the Princess of Gazna to believe herself my wife, I left her before daybreak, not without promising to return the following day. I regained my machine with all speed, entered it, and ascended very far in order not to be seen

by the soldiers. I descended in the wood, left the coffer there, and went towards the town, where I bought provisions for a week, some magnificent garments, a beautiful turban of Indian cloth striped with gold, and a rich belt. I did not forget to buy essences and the best perfumes. I spent all my money in these purchases without troubling about the future; it seemed to me I could want for nothing after so pleasant an adventure. I remained all day in the wood, where I occupied myself in adorning and perfuming myself. As soon as night had come I entered the box and betook myself to the roof of Schirina's palace. I introduced myself into her apartment as on the preceding night.

'The princess gave evidence of awaiting me with much impatience: "O great Prophet," she said, "I was beginning to get anxious, and I feared lest you had already forgotten your wife."

'"Ah! my dear princess," I replied, "how could you fear that? Since you have my word, ought you not to be certain that I shall always love you?"

'"But tell me," she replied, "why you look so young? I thought that the Prophet Mahomet was a venerable old man."

'"Do not be mistaken," I said; "that is the right idea to have of me, and if I appeared before you as I appear sometimes to the Faithful to whom I wish to do honour, you would see me with a long white beard and a bald head; but I thought you would like me to appear less aged, that is why I appear in the form of a young man." The governess, joining in the conversation, told me that I was very well made, and could not appear more agreeably as a husband.

'I left the castle again at break of day, for fear lest they should discover that I was a false prophet. I returned the following day, and I conducted myself always so cleverly that Schirina and Mahpakar did not suspect for a moment that there was any deception in the matter. It is true that the princess insensibly became so well inclined towards me that that contributed not a little to make her believe all I had said, for when one is favourably inclined towards anybody, one does not doubt their sincerity.

'At the end of several days the King of Gazna, followed by his officers, came to the palace of the princess his daughter; and finding the doors well closed and his seal on the locks, he said to the

vizirs who accompanied him: "All goes as well as can be. So long as the doors of this palace remain like this, I little fear the misfortune with which my daughter is threatened." He ascended alone to the apartment of Schirina, who could not help being troubled at sight of him. He perceived it and wished to know the cause. His curiosity increased the anxiety of the princess, who, seeing herself obliged to satisfy it, related to him all that had passed.

'Your majesty, sire, can imagine the surprise of the King Bahaman when he learnt that he was, without knowing it, the father-in-law of Mahomet.

'"Ah! what absurdity," he cried; "how credulous you are, my daughter! O Heaven! I now see that it is useless to try and avoid the misfortunes which you have in store for us. The horoscope of Schirina is fulfilled. A traitor has deceived her."

'Thus saying, he left the apartment of the princess much agitated, and searched the palace throughout. But he searched everywhere in vain; he found no trace of the villain. His astonishment redoubled.

'"How," he said, "can the bold fellow have

entered the castle? That is what I cannot conceive."

'Then he called his vizirs and confidants. They all assembled at his call, and seeing him much troubled, they were alarmed.

'"What is it, sire?" said the first minister to him. "You seem anxious and agitated. What misfortune causes the trouble we see in your face?"

'The king told them all he had heard, and asked them what they thought of this adventure. The grand vizir spoke first. He said that this pretended marriage might be genuine, although it had all the appearance of a fable; that there were in the world powerful houses who made no difficulty in attributing their origin to such events, and that for his part he thought it quite possible that the princess had been wedded to Mahomet.

'The other vizirs, out of complaisance perhaps for him who had just spoken, were of the same opinion, but a courtier argued against it thus: "I am surprised to see sensible people give credence to a report so little worthy of belief. Can wise people believe that our great Prophet is capable of coming to earth to wed women, he who in the heavenly place is surrounded by the most

beautiful houris? That shocks common sense, and if the king will believe me, instead of lending himself to a ridiculous story, he will investigate this matter. I am certain he will soon discover the rogue who, under a sacred name, has had the audacity to deceive the princess."

'Although Bahaman was naturally rather credulous, and held his first minister to be a man of sound judgment, and saw that all his vizirs believed Schirina to be really married to Mahomet, he was inclined to disbelieve it. He resolved to clear up the mystery; but, wishing to do things prudently, and to try and speak himself without witnesses to the would-be Prophet, he dismissed his vizirs and his courtiers.

'"Retire," he said; "I wish to stay to-night in this castle with my daughter. Go, and return to-morrow."

'They regained the town, and Bahaman questioned his daughter anew, awaiting the night; he asked her if I had eaten with her.

'"No, my lord," said his daughter, "I have presented meat and drink to him in vain; he would not have any, and I have not seen him take any nourishment since he came."

'"Relate the adventure to me again," he replied, "and do not conceal any particular from me."

'Schirina detailed it to him anew, and the king attentively weighed all the circumstances.

'Night came, however. Bahaman seated himself on a sofa, and had candles lit, which were placed before him on a marble table. He drew his sword to make use of it if necessary, and avenge with blood the insult to his honour. He expected me every moment, and it was not without agitation that he looked to see me suddenly arrive.

'That night, by chance, the air was all aflame. A long lightning flash passed before the king's eyes and made him wince. He approached the window through which Schirina had told him I would enter, and, seeing the sky all aflame, he became very troubled, although he merely witnessed a very natural thing. He did not look upon these meteors as the result of the inflamed atmosphere, he liked better to believe that these fires announced the descent of Mahomet to earth, and that the heavens were so luminous only because its gates were opened to let the Prophet pass out.

'In the king's disposition of mind, I could present myself with impunity before him; so that, far from appearing furious when I appeared at the window, he was seized with respect and fear. He let fall his sword, and prostrating himself at my feet, he kissed them, and said: "O great Prophet, who am I and what have I done to deserve the honour of being your father-in-law?"

'I judged by these words of what had passed between the king and the princess, and I knew that the good Bahaman was not more difficult to deceive than his daughter. I was delighted to discover that I had not to deal with one of those firm individuals who would have subjected the Prophet to an embarrassing examination, and, profiting by his weakness, "O king," I said, raising him, "you are, of all Mussulman princes, the most attached to my sect, and consequently the one who should be most agreeable to me. It was written on the fatal tablets that your daughter should be deceived by a man, which your astrologers have discovered by the light of astrology. But I have prayed the Most High to spare you this unhappiness, which

from love of me he has done on condition that Schirina should become one of my wives, to which I consented in order to reward you for the good actions which you do every day."

'The King Bahaman was not at all in a condition to be undeceived. This feeble prince believed all that I told him, and, charmed at the alliance with the great Prophet, he threw himself a second time at my feet to testify his gratitude at my kindness. I raised him again, embraced him, and assured him of my protection. He could not find terms strong enough in which to thank me. After that, thinking it becoming to leave me with his daughter, he retired into another room.

'I remained with Schirina for some hours, but delighted as I was to be with her I did not forget that the time was passing. I feared lest the daylight should surprise me and my coffer be perceived upon the roof, so I left towards daybreak and regained the wood.

'The following morning the vizirs and the courtiers betook themselves to the palace of the princess. They asked the king if he had informed himself on the subject that interested him. "Yes," he said, "I have seen the great Prophet himself and

have spoken to him. He is the husband of my daughter; nothing is more certain."

'At this speech the vizir and the courtiers turned towards him who had opposed the possibility of this marriage and reproached him for his incredulity, but they found him still of the same opinion. He upheld it with obstinacy, say what the king would to persuade him that Mahomet had married Schirina. Bahaman became almost angry with this incredulous fellow, who became the laughing-stock of the council.

'A new incident, which took place the same day, finally confirmed the vizirs in their opinion. As they were returning to the town with their master, a storm overtook them in the open plain. Brilliant lightning flashed in their eyes and such terrible thunder was heard that it might have been the last day of the world. It happened by chance that the horse of the incredulous courtier took fright. It reared and threw its rider to the ground, breaking his leg. This accident was looked upon as evidence of the celestial wrath. "O wretched fellow!" cried the king, on seeing the courtier fall, "behold the fruit of your obstinacy. You would not believe me, and the Prophet has punished you."

'The wounded man was carried home, and Bahaman had no sooner returned to his palace than he had it published at Gazna that he wished all the inhabitants to celebrate with festivities the marriage of Schirina with Mahomet. I was walking that day in the town. I heard the news as well as the adventure that had befallen the courtier. It is inconceivable how credulous and superstitious those people were. Public rejoicings were held, and everywhere was heard the cry, "Long live Bahaman, the father-in-law of the Prophet!"

'As soon as night fell I regained the wood and was soon with the princess. "Beautiful Schirina," I said to her on entering her apartment, "you do not know what has passed to-day in the plain. A courtier who doubted your husband to be Mahomet has expiated the doubt. I raised a storm which alarmed his horse; the courtier fell and broke his leg. I have not judged fit to push vengeance further, but I swear by my tomb at Medina that if anyone has any further doubt of your happiness it shall cost him his life." After having passed several hours with the princess, I retired.

'The following day the king assembled his vizirs and his courtiers. "Let us all go together," he said,

and ask pardon of Mahomet for the unfortunate man who has refused to believe me and who has received the punishment of his incredulity." At the same time they mounted their horses and went to the palace of the princess. The king himself opened the doors he had locked and sealed the preceding day. He ascended, followed by his vizirs, to the apartment of his daughter.

'"Schirina," he said, "we come to beg you to intercede with the Prophet for a man who has drawn down his anger upon him."

'"I know," replied the princess; "Mahomet has spoken to me about it." Then she repeated what I had said to her at night, and told them that I had sworn to exterminate all those who should doubt her marriage with the Prophet.

'When the good King Bahaman heard this speech, he turned towards his vizirs and courtiers and said, "Had we not already placed our belief in all we have seen, could we now be otherwise than persuaded that Mahomet is my son-in-law. You see he has told my daughter himself that he raised this storm to punish an unbeliever."

'All the ministers and the others remained convinced that she was the spouse of the Prophet.

They prostrated themselves before her and begged her very humbly to intercede with me in favour of the wounded courtier, which she promised to do.

'In the meanwhile I had eaten all my provisions, and as I had no money left, the Prophet Mahomet began to be at a loss what to do. I thought of an expedient. "My princess," I said one night to Schirina, "we have forgotten to observe a formality in our marriage. You have given me no dowry, and this omission distresses me."

'"Well, dear husband," she replied, "I will speak about it to my father to-morrow; he will doubtless send all his riches here."

'"No, no," I replied, "there is no need to speak to him: I care little for treasures; riches are useless to me. It is sufficient for you to give me some of your jewels, it is the only dowry I ask."

'Schirina wished to load me with all her precious stones to make a better dowry, but I contented myself with taking two big diamonds, which I sold the following day to a jeweller of Gazna. I was thus enabled to continue to play the part of Mahomet.

'I had been leading a very agreeable life, passing as the Prophet for nearly a month, when an am-

bassador arrived in the town of Gazna on behalf of a neighbouring king to ask Schirina in marriage. He was soon received in audience, and as soon as he had revealed the object of his embassy Bahaman said to him, "I am sorry not to be able to give my daughter to the king your master. I have given her in marriage to the Prophet Mahomet."

'The ambassador judged from this answer that the King of Gazna had gone mad. He took leave of this prince and returned to his master, who at first thought with him that he had lost his senses, then, imputing the refusal to contempt, he was angry at it. He raised troops, formed a great army, and entered the kingdom of Gazna.

'The king, called Cassim, was stronger than Bahaman, who, moreover, prepared so slowly to receive his enemy that he could not prevent his making great progress. Cassim defeated several troops who endeavoured to oppose his progress, advanced hastily towards the town of Gazna, and found the army of Bahaman entrenched in the plain before the castle of the Princess Schirina. The design of the irritated lover was to attack him within his entrenchments; but as his troops had need of repose, and as he had arrived in the plain

in the evening only, he delayed the attack till the following morning.

'However, the King of Gazna, informed as to the number and valour of Cassim's soldiers, began to tremble. He assembled his council, at which the courtier who had been wounded in falling from his horse spoke thus:

'"I am astonished that the king should appear to be uneasy on this occasion. What alarm can, not Cassim alone, but all the princes of the world, cause the father-in-law of Mahomet? Your Majesty, sire, has only to address himself to his son-in-law. Implore the aid of the great Prophet, he will soon confound your enemies. He should do so, as he is the cause of Cassim's coming to trouble the peace of your subjects."

'Although this speech was only made in derision it did not fail to inspire confidence in Bahaman.

'"You are right," he said to the courtier, "I ought to address myself to the Prophet. I am going to beg him to repulse my enemy, and I dare hope he will not refuse my prayer."

'At these words he went to find Schirina.

'"My daughter," he said to her, "to-morrow at daybreak Cassim will attack us. I fear lest he will

force our entrenchments. I come here to pray Mahomet to succour us. Use all your influence with him to get him to take our part."

'"My lord," replied the princess, "it will not be very difficult to interest the Prophet on our behalf; he will soon disperse the enemy's troops, and all the kings of the world will learn at Cassim's expense to respect you."

'"Nevertheless," replied the king, "the night advances, and the Prophet does not appear; can he have abandoned us?"

'"No, father," replied Schirina. "Do not believe that he will fail us in the moment of need. He sees from the heaven; he dwells in the army which assails us, and he is perhaps preparing to spread disorder and terror amongst them."

'It was, indeed, what Mahomet wished to do. I had, during the day, perceived from afar the troops of Cassim. I had remarked the disposition of them, and particularly noticed the whereabouts of the king. I gathered some large and small pebbles; I filled my coffer with them, and in the middle of the night I rose in the air. I advanced towards the tents of Cassim. I detected without difficulty the one in which the king slept. It was

a very high pavilion, well gilt, made in the shape of a dome, supported by twelve columns of painted wood. The intervals between the columns were formed of branches of different sorts of trees interlaced. Towards the top were two windows, one looking east and one south.

'All the soldiers surrounding the tent slept, which enabled me to descend as far as one of the windows without being seen. I saw the king asleep upon a sofa, his head resting upon a satin cushion. I came half out of my coffer, and throwing a large pebble at Cassim, I struck him on the forehead, and wounded him dangerously. He uttered a cry which soon awoke his guards and officers. They hastened to him, and found him covered with blood and almost unconscious. They raised a cry, the alarm spread, everyone asking what had happened. The rumour spread that the king had been wounded by an unknown hand. Whilst the perpetrator was sought for, I rose into the clouds and let fall a shower of stones on the royal tent and its neighbourhood. Some soldiers were wounded, and cried out that it was raining stones. The news spread, and to confirm it I threw pebbles everywhere. Then terror seized the army; officers

and soldiers believed that the Prophet was angry with Cassim, and declared his wrath by this miracle.

'Finally Bahaman's enemies took flight and fled. They fled with such precipitation that they left everything behind them, crying:

'"We are lost. Mahomet is going to exterminate us all."

'The King of Gazna was somewhat surprised at daybreak when, instead of being attacked, he perceived the enemy retiring. He immediately pursued them with his best soldiers. He made great carnage amongst them, and overtook Cassim, whose wound prevented his going very fast.

'"Why," said he, "have you entered my dominions contrary to all right and reason? What occasion have I given you to make war?"

'"Bahaman," replied the conquered king, "I thought you had refused me your daughter out of contempt, and I wished to revenge myself. I could not believe that the Prophet was your son-in-law, but I do not doubt it now, since it is he who has wounded me and dispersed my army."

'Bahaman ceased to pursue his enemies, and returned to Gazna with Cassim, who died of his wound the same day. They divided the booty,

which was considerable, and the soldiers returned home laden with wealth. Prayers were offered in all the mosques to thank Heaven for having confounded the enemies of the State; and when night had come, the king went unaccompanied to the palace of the princess.

'"My daughter," he said, "I come to give the thanks to the Prophet that are due to him. You have heard from the courier I sent you all Mahomet has done for us. I am so overwhelmed by it that I die with impatience to kiss his knees."

'He soon had the satisfaction he sought. I entered by the usual window into Schirina's apartment, where I expected he would be. He threw himself at my feet and kissed the earth, saying:

'"Oh! great Prophet, no words can express to you all I feel. Read for yourself in my heart all its gratitude."

'I raised Bahaman and kissed him on the forehead.

'"Prince," I said, "could you think I would refuse you my help in the dilemma you were placed for love of me? I punished the proud Cassim, who intended to make himself master over your dominions, and take Schirina to place her among

the slaves of his seraglio. Do not fear henceforth that any potentate in the world will dare make war on you. If anyone had the audacity to come and attack you, I should let fall upon the troops a shower of fire which would reduce them to cinders."

'Having reassured the King of Gazna that I took his kingdom under my protection, I related to him how the army of the enemy had been terrified on seeing stones rain down on the camp. Bahaman repeated to me what Cassim had said to him, and then he retired to leave Schirina and me at liberty. This princess, who was not less sensible than the king, her father, to the service I had rendered to the State, showed me much gratitude and caressed me a thousand times. I almost forgot the passing of time. Day dawned when I regained my coffer; but I had passed so well as Mahomet in everybody's mind, that had the soldiers seen me in the air they would not have been disabused. I almost fancied myself to be the Prophet after having put an army to rout.

'Two days after they had buried Cassim, to whom, although an enemy, they gave a superb funeral, the King of Gazna ordered rejoicings to be held in the town as much for the defeat of the enemy

as to celebrate solemnly the marriage of the Princess Schirina with Mahomet. I thought I ought to signalise by some wonder a feast made in my honour. To do so I bought in Gazna some pitch, with some cotton-pods, and a light machine for making fire. I passed the day in the wood preparing a firework. I dipped the pods in the pitch, and at night, whilst the people were rejoicing in the streets, I rose above the town, as high as was possible so that my coffer might not be distinguished by the light of my firework. Then I struck fire, and lit the pitch, which together with the pods made a very fine display. Then I disappeared into the wood. Day having appeared shortly after, I went into the town to have the pleasure of hearing what was said of me. I was not disappointed. The people said a thousand extravagant things about the trick I had played. Some said it was Mahomet who, to show that their feast was agreeable to him, had made celestial fire appear, and others averred they had seen in the midst of these new meteors the Prophet appear with a white beard and a venerable appearance.

'These remarks amused me infinitely, but alas! whilst I was enjoying them my coffer, my dear

coffer, the instrument of my wonders, was burning in the wood. Apparently a spark which I had not seen ignited the machine during my absence and consumed it. I found it reduced to cinders on my return. A father who, returning home, sees his only son pierced by mortal wounds and bathed in his blood, could not be more deeply grieved than was I at that moment. The wood echoed with my cries and regrets, I tore my hair and garments, I do not know how my life was spared in my despair.

'The misfortune was, however, without remedy. I must decide upon a course to adopt. One only was left to me—that was to go and seek fortune elsewhere. So the Prophet Mahomet, leaving Bahaman and Schirina much troubled, left the town of Gazna.

'Three days later I met a big caravan of Cairo merchants who were returning to their country. I mingled with them and went to grand Cairo, where I became a weaver. I remained there several years, then I came to Damascus, where I follow the same pursuit. I appear very pleased with my lot, but am not so really. I cannot forget the happiness I formerly enjoyed. Schirina

is ever present in my memory. For my peace of mind I would like to banish her from my thoughts; I do all I can, but in vain.

'That, sire, is what your majesty has ordered me to tell you. I know you will not approve of the deception I have worked upon the King of Gazna and the Princess Schirina; more than once I have perceived that my story repelled you, and that your virtue was shocked at my sacrilegious audacity. But remember, I pray, that you exacted sincerity from me, and deign to pardon the tale of my adventures on account of the necessity of obeying you.'

The King of Damascus dismissed the weaver after having heard his story. Then he said to the vizir, 'The adventures which this man has just related to us are not less surprising than yours. But although he is no happier than you, do not think that I give in yet, and that I can conclude from that that nobody in the world enjoys perfect happiness. I wish to interrogate my generals, my courtiers, and all the officers of my house. Go vizir,' he added, 'and bring them to me one after the other.'

Atalmulc obeyed; he first brought the generals. The king ordered them to say frankly whether any secret trouble poisoned the sweetness of their life, assuring them that this confession should have no ill-consequences. They all said immediately that they had their troubles and were far from tranquil in their minds. One said he was too ambitious, another too avaricious; another admitted that he was jealous of the glory acquired by his equals, and complained that the people did not do justice to his skill in the art of war. Finally, the generals having revealed their innermost souls, Bedreddin, seeing none of them were happy, said to his vizir that the following day he wished to hear all his courtiers speak.

They were interrogated one after the other. Not one of them was found to be contented. 'I see,' said one, 'my credit diminish daily.' 'My plans are thwarted,' said another, 'and I cannot attain to what I wish.' 'I must,' said another, 'cajole my enemies and study to please them.' Another said he had spent all his wealth and even exhausted all his resources.

The King of Damascus, finding neither among his courtiers nor among his generals the man he

sought, thought he might be found among the officers of his house. He had the patience to speak to them one by one, and they made him the same reply as the courtiers and the generals, that is to say, that they were not exempt from trouble. One complained of his wife, another of his children ; those who were not rich said that poverty made them unhappy, and those who possessed riches lacked health or had some other cause of grief.

Bedreddin, in spite of all that, could not lose hope of meeting some contented man. 'Provided I find one,' he said to the vizir, 'I do not ask more, for you maintain not one exists.'

'Yes, sire,' replied Atalmulc, 'I maintain it, and your majesty seeks in vain.'

'I am not yet persuaded of it,' replied the king, 'and a method occurs to me of soon knowing what I ought to think on the matter.'

At the same time he ordered it to be published in the town that all those who were satisfied with their lot, and whose rest was not disturbed with any trouble, were to appear in three days before his throne. The time expired ; no one appeared at the court ; it seemed as though all the inhabitants were of the vizir's way of thinking.

When the King of Damascus saw that no one presented himself, he was very astonished. 'It is inconceivable,' he cried. 'Is it possible that in Damascus, in a town so large and so peopled, there is no happy man?'

'Sire,' said Atalmulc, 'if you were to interrogate all the people of the earth they would tell you they are unhappy. You alone perhaps do not suffer, for you do not seem to know love.'

'You are greatly mistaken, then,' said Bedreddin, 'to think I am not at all amorous because I have no mistress. To disabuse you I will tell you that I love like you, and that love alone prevents my being happy. It is not a princess who reigns in my heart, it is a woman of lowly condition who absorbs me. I will tell this story. I did not intend to make you such a confidence, but you give me an opportunity I cannot let pass.'

VII

The Story of the Beautiful Aroupa

SOME years ago there lived at Damascus an old merchant named Banou. He had a very beautiful country house not far from the town, two shops full of Indian cloths, and all sorts of gold and silken stuffs, also a young wife of extraordinary beauty.

Banou was a man of pleasure. He loved spending money, and prided himself on his generosity. He did not content himself with regaling his friends, he lent them money. He assisted those who had need of help. In fact, he would not have been satisfied with himself if he had passed a day without having done someone a service. He found so many occasions of exercising his generous inclinations that he gradually damaged his business. He saw that he was in-

convenienced, but he could not resolve to change his line of conduct; so that, hampering himself more and more every day, he was obliged to sell his country house, and gradually he fell in want.

When he saw his fortune consumed, he had recourse to his friends: he received no assistance from them; they all abandoned him. He thought his debtors at least would give him back what he had lent them; but some repudiated the debt, and others found themselves unable to discharge it. This troubled Banou so much that he fell ill.

During his illness he remembered by chance having lent a thousand gold sequins to a doctor of his acquaintance. He called his wife, and said to her: 'Oh, my dear Arouya, we must not despair yet, I have just remembered one of my debtors whom I had forgotten. I once lent him a thousand gold sequins; it is the doctor Danischmend. I do not think him so dishonest as the others. Go to him, since I cannot go myself, and tell him I beg him to send me the sum he received from me.'

Arouya immediately took her veil and went to

the house of Danischmend. She was introduced into the apartment of the doctor, who begged her to sit down and tell him what brought her.

'My lord doctor,' replied the young woman, raising her veil, 'I am the wife of Banou the merchant; he salutes you in wishing you all sorts of prosperity, and begs you to have the kindness to give him back the thousand gold sequins he has lent you.'

At these words, which the beautiful Arouya spoke sweetly and graciously, the doctor, as red as fire, fixed his eyes on the wife of the merchant, and replied; 'O fairy countenance! I will willingly give you what you ask, not as something due to your husband, but to yourself, for the pleasure you do me in coming to my house. I feel that the sight of you makes me beside myself. You can make me the happiest of doctors. Return, I beg, the sentiments which you inspire in me; the more that your husband is too advanced in age to deserve your affection. If you wish to accept my love instead of one thousand sequins, I will give you two, and I swear by my head and eyes that I will be your slave all my life.'

Thus saying, the too passionate doctor, to

prove by his actions that he was not less enamoured than he said, approached the young woman and wished to press her in his arms: but she repulsed him, and said, looking at him with an air which presaged no good: 'Stop, insolent fellow, and cease to flatter yourself that I shall listen to you. Were you to offer me all the riches of Egypt, if it depended on you to give them me, you could not corrupt my fidelity. Place in my hands the thousand sequins which you owe my husband, and do not waste your time in trying to force my inclinations.'

The doctor was too intelligent not to gather from this speech what he had to expect from the virtuous Arouya. He lost hope of persuading her, and as he was a very brutal man, he soon changed his tone. 'You must,' he said, very angrily, 'be very bold to ask me for money: I owe nothing to Banou your husband, and if the old fool has ruined himself by his extravagance, I am not fool enough to contribute towards reinstating him.'

At these words he had her abruptly put out of the house, and only just refrained from striking her.

The young woman returned quite in tears to her home. 'My dear Banou,' she said to her husband, 'the doctor Danischmend is not a more honest man than your other debtors. He had the audacity to maintain that he owed you nothing.'

'O, the ungrateful fellow!' cried the old merchant; 'is it possible that he abandons me in the hour of need? But what am I saying, abandon me? He is dishonest enough to repudiate having received the sum. The rogue! he appeared to be an honest man. I would have trusted him with all my fortune when he asked me for a thousand sequins. Whom can one trust in nowadays? What shall I do?' he continued. 'Must I leave him alone? No, I will have the law on him. Go and find the cadi; he is a severe judge and the sworn enemy of injustice. Relate to him all the doctor's perfidy. I am sure he will have pity on me and will do me justice.'

The old merchant's wife went to the cadi. She entered a hall where this judge was giving audience to the people, and stood apart. The majesty of her figure and bearing caused her to be much remarked. The cadi loved the fair sex. As

soon as he saw Arouya, he made her a sign to approach, and conducted her himself into his cabinet. He made her sit on a sofa and raise her veil; but he no sooner saw the extreme beauty with which she was endowed than he was as charmed as the doctor.

'O sugar cane!' he cried, in a transport of love, 'beautiful rose of the world's garden, tell me what you want, and be assured beforehand that I shall do for you all you wish.'

Then she told him of Danischmend's dishonesty. She begged him very humbly to interpose his authority to oblige the doctor to give back what he owed to her husband.

'That is just,' interrupted the cadi, who felt himself becoming more and more enamoured. 'I shall know how to constrain him. He shall give back the thousand sequins, or I shall have his entrails torn out. But, charming houri,' he continued, softening, 'think, I beg, that the bird of my heart is caught in the meshes of your beauty's net. Grant to me the affection that you refused to the doctor, and I will immediately make you a present of four thousand gold sequins.'

At this speech Arouya melted into tears.

'O Heaven!' she cried, 'is there no virtue among men? I cannot find one who is truly generous. Even those charged with the punishment of the guilty do not scruple to commit crimes.'

The cadi tried in vain to dry the young woman's tears. As he persisted in courting her, and assured her that otherwise she need not expect any service from him, she rose and went out, deeply wounded.

When Banou saw his wife return, it was not difficult to see that she had no good news to announce to him.

'I see,' he said, 'that you are not very pleased with the cadi. He has refused you his protection. The doctor, Danischmend, is doubtless a friend of his.'

'Alas!' she replied, 'I have taken trouble for nothing. He will not do justice to us. No hope remains for us. What is to become of us?'

'We must apply to the Governor of Damascus,' he replied. 'I have several times sold him stuffs on credit. He even owes me money. Let us implore his support. I believe he would like to serve us.'

The following day Arouya, veiled, did not fail to go to the governor. She asked to speak to him. She was led to his apartment.

He received her with much civility, and begged her to uncover her face. As she knew what the consequences of it would be, she wished to excuse herself, but could not: he pressed her so gallantly to raise her veil that she could not help doing so.

If the sight of her had inflamed the doctor and the cadi, it made no less impression on the governor, who was a most impressionable old man.

'What charms!' he cried. 'I never saw anyone so attractive. Ah! tell me,' he continued, 'who you are, and what I can do for you.'

'My lord,' she replied, 'I am the wife of a merchant called Banou, who has sometimes had the honour to sell you stuffs.'

'Oh! I know him well,' he interrupted. 'He is one of the men whom I love and esteem much. How happy he is to have so charming a wife! How enviable is his lot!'

'He is much more worthy of pity,' interrupted Arouya, in her turn. 'You do not know to what a state the unfortunate Banou is reduced.'

At the same time she put before him the bad condition her husband's affairs were in, and told him the reasons which compelled her to seek him out.

The governor readily promised to exercise his authority in compelling the doctor, Danischmend, to pay what he owed to Banou: but he was not more generous than the cadi.

'I grant you my protection,' he said to the young woman. 'I shall send for the doctor, and if he does not give back the thousand sequins he has received with a good grace he shall repent it. In a word, I undertake to have them given back to you, provided that from this moment you begin to show your gratitude for what I propose to do for you; for we lords like the reward to precede the service.'

As the beautiful Arouya did not wish to return the love of the governor any more than that of the others, she retired in despair.

'O Banou!' she said to her husband, 'we must give up hope. No one sympathises with us in our troubles, nor wishes to help us in any way.'

These words drove the old merchant to despair. He cursed men a thousand times, till his wife said:

'Cease to curse the authors of our misfortunes. What relief can your vain laments give you? It were better to think of other means of getting your money, and Mahomet himself inspires me with one. Do not ask me,' she added, 'what it is. I do not find it desirable to tell you. Be content with the assurance that it will make a great deal of noise, and that we shall be fully revenged upon the doctor, the cadi, and the governor.'

'Do all you wish,' said Banou. 'I trust to you.'

The merchant's wife immediately left the house, and having passed through two or three streets, she entered a carpenter's shop. The owner saluted her, and said:

'Beautiful lady, what do you wish?'

'I want three coffers,' she said. 'I beg you to give them me in a good condition.'

The carpenter showed her several of different sizes. She chose three, which would each, without difficulty, contain a man. She paid for them, and had them sent home immediately. Then she dressed herself in her richest clothes, and adorned herself with all the jewels which her misfortunes had not yet reduced her to sell, not forgetting perfumes.

In such a fitting condition to charm, she went to find the doctor, and employing all the airs and graces of a sham effrontery, she took off her veil without waiting for the doctor to ask her to uncover; then, looking at him with eyes capable of inspiring love in the most insensible of men, 'Lord doctor,' she said, 'I come to beg you again to give back the thousand sequins you owe my husband. If you give them back for love of me, you can count on my gratitude.'

'Beautiful lady,' replied the doctor, 'my feelings are still the same. I have two thousand sequins to give you on the conditions I proposed.'

'I see,' replied Arouya, 'that you will not yield. I must resign myself with a good grace to pleasing you. I expect you to-night,' she added, putting out one of her beautiful hands, which he kissed with effusion; 'bring the money you have promised me, and come at ten o'clock precisely, and knock at the door of my house. A faithful slave will open to you and will introduce you into my presence.'

The doctor, at these words, which seemed to promise him all he desired, lost control over himself. He kissed the young woman without her being

able to defend herself. But she escaped from his hands promptly, and seeing he was certain to keep the appointment, she left his house to go and play the same part with the cadi.

As soon as she was alone with this judge she said: 'O my lord, since I left you I have not had a moment's rest. I have remembered again and again everything you have told me. It seemed to me that I was not displeasing to you, and that it only depended on me to gain your affection. What a satisfaction for a woman of my class to see herself admired by a young and well-made cadi! My heart, I confess, is not proof against such an agreeable prospect.'

The cadi was delighted. 'Yes, my queen,' he cried, 'you shall, if you wish, be the first lady of my seraglio and the sovereign mistress of my wishes. Leave old Banou and come and live with me.'

'No, my lord,' replied Arouya, 'I cannot make up my mind to make him so unhappy. Besides, by so doing I should lose my reputation. I wish to avoid scandal and have secret interviews only with you.'

'Where,' replied the cadi, 'can I meet you?'

'In my house,' replied the merchant's wife; 'it is the safest spot. Banou can be easily deceived. He is overwhelmed with old age and infirmities. He need cause you no uneasiness. Come to me this very night if you wish,' she added; 'be at the door of our house at eleven o'clock, but come alone, for I should be in despair if any of your people knew the weakness I have for you.'

The precautions taken by the young woman, far from making the cadi suspicious, seemed to increase the value of his good fortune. He did not fail to testify to the lady the pleasure it gave him to see her so favourably inclined towards him. He paid her a thousand compliments, and he promised to go to her at the hour indicated. Thereupon they separated very well pleased, although they had each very different thoughts.

Thus were two lovers ready to fall into the trap set for them. There was only the governor left to deceive, which was not very difficult. The young woman was skilful enough to entrap him with the others. He readily believed all she said to him, and the result of their conversation was that she gave him a tryst at her house at midnight,

and he swore to come alone, with all the discretion she desired.

'Great Prophet,' said Arouya, when she was outside the governor's palace, 'protector of faithful Mussulmans! Mahomet, you who from heaven above look down upon my actions, you see the bottom of my soul: let my plan succeed, and do not forsake me in the danger of carrying it out!'

After this apostrophe, which she thought it wiser to make in order to more surely succeed in the object she had in view, she felt full of confidence; and obeying every impulse as so many secret counsels of the Prophet, she went to buy all sorts of fruit and preserves, which she had sent to her house. She had an old slave whose fidelity was known to her: she informed her of her plan, and gave her her orders. They then began to prepare an apartment: they arranged the furniture, and set up a table on which were placed several porcelain dishes filled with fruits and dried sweetmeats. Had the young woman truly wished to make her guests welcome, she could not have made greater preparations to receive them.

She awaited their arrival with extreme im-

patience; she even feared sometimes they would not come; but her fear was very ill-founded. They had conceived hopes too agreeable to be abandoned. The doctor Danischmend did not fail to be at the door at ten o'clock precisely. He knocked, the old slave opened the door, let him in, and conducted him to her mistress's apartment, saying quite low: 'Take care not to make a noise for fear of waking the old merchant, who is sleeping.'

As soon as Danischmend saw Arouya, who had adorned herself with as much care as if it had been a question of receiving a cherished lover, he was dazzled with the brilliancy of her charms, and said to her in an impassioned manner: 'O, phœnix of the field of beauty! I cannot sufficiently congratulate myself upon my good fortune. There,' he continued, throwing a purse upon the table, 'are the two thousand sequins I have promised; it is not too much to pay for such happiness.'

Arouya smiled at this speech; she put out her hand to the doctor, and after having made him seat himself on a sofa, she said to him: 'My lord doctor, remove your turban and your belt, make yourself at ease. You are here as at home.

Dalla Monkhtala,' she continued, addressing the old slave, 'come and help me to wait upon my lord, for his turban inconveniences him.'

Thus saying, the lady herself undid Danischmend's waist-belt. They then both removed his outer robe, and the slave removed his turban, so that he remained with his head bare.

'Let us begin,' the young woman said, 'with the refreshments which I have prepared for you.' At the same time they set themselves to eat preserves and drink wine.

At the end of the repast, which the lady enlivened with conversation that charmed the doctor, a noise was heard in the house. Arouya appeared alarmed, as though she were unable to account for it. 'Dalla,' she said to the old slave with an uneasy air, 'go and see what can be the cause of the noise which we hear.'

Dalla left the room, and returned a moment afterwards, saying to her mistress with much agitation: 'Ah, mistress, we are lost! Your brother has just arrived from Cairo. He is at this moment with your husband, who is going to bring him to you here.'

'O, unfortunate arrival!' cried the wife of

Banou, affecting to be greatly grieved. 'What an annoying coincidence! It is not enough that they come to interrupt my feast, they must even surprise me with my lord, and I must pass for a false woman in the minds of my neighbours! What is going to become of me? How can I prevent this shame from overtaking me?'

'You are soon perplexed,' said the old slave. 'Let the Lord Danischmend shut himself up in one of the three coffers which your husband has had made to put the merchandise in which he wishes to send to Bagdad. They are in your cabinet and we have the keys of them.'

Dalla's advice was approved of. The doctor entered the cabinet and got into one of the three coffers, which Arouya herself double-locked, saying to Danischmend: 'Oh, my dear doctor! do not get impatient. As soon as my brother and my husband have retired I shall come and rejoin you, and we will pass the rest of the night together, all the more agreeably that our feast has been interrupted.'

The promise which Arouya made the doctor to come and take him out of his prison, and the hope she gave him of compensating him for the weary

minutes he was to spend in the coffer, prevented his being troubled by an adventure which was to have still more disagreeable consequences for him. Instead of suspecting the sincerity of the lady and imagining that the position he was in might be a trap set for him, he preferred to persuade himself that he was loved, and to yield to the sweetest illusions in which lovers ordinarily indulge who flatter themselves in vain that they are about to find their affection returned.

The young woman left him in her cabinet and returned to her room, saying quite low to her slave: 'There is one already caught in my net. We shall see whether the others escape.'

'That we shall soon know,' replied Dalla; 'for it is nearly eleven o'clock, and I do not think the cadi will fail to appear at the tryst.'

The old slave was right in thinking that the judge would not be less punctual than the doctor. In fact, knocking was heard at Banou's door before the hour indicated. Dalla ran to open it, and seeing that it was a man she asked his name.

'I am the cadi,' he said.

'Speak low,' replied the slave, 'you might

wake the Lord Banou. My mistress, who has a great weakness for you, has ordered me to introduce you into her apartment. Have the kindness to follow me. I am going to conduct you thither.'

The judge felt his joy redouble at these words. He followed Dalla, who conducted him to the apartment of the young woman.

'Oh, my queen!' he cried, approaching the beautiful Arouya, 'I see you at length! With what impatience have I awaited this happy moment! Am I permitted,' he added, throwing himself at her feet, 'am I permitted to assure you that no happiness is comparable to mine.'

The young woman, raising the cadi, begged him to seat himself on the sofa, and said: 'My lord, I am very glad you are pleased with me, since you are the man in the world I like the best, or rather the first person who has attracted my attention. This old slave will tell you that. I have simply languished since the last interview I had with you. I speak of you to her unceasingly, and my passion leaves me no rest.'

When the cadi heard Arouya speak thus, he almost lost his senses. 'Lofty cypress,' he said,

'living image of the houris, you enchant me with such sweet words, sweeter than the song of the nightingale to the rose. Your kindness makes me indeed happier than a king.'

'I am enchanted,' replied the lady, 'to see you so loving. That flatters my affection very pleasantly, and your praise gives me too much pleasure for me to refuse to hear it. I have prepared refreshment for you, and I wish to drink with you. But first remove your turban and lie down on this couch; I am going into my husband's room to see whether the old man is asleep, and I shall return to you immediately.'

The judge at this speech, imagining that he was about to share a delightful feast, promptly obeyed and sat on the couch. He had hardly done so, when he heard a noise. A moment after Arouya came back much agitated, and said to him: 'Ah! my lord cadi, you do not know what has just happened. We have here an old slave whom I did not wish to confide in, because he was too attached to my husband: he saw you enter the house, and has warned his master, who has immediately sent for my relations to witness my conduct.'

'They will all enter my apartment. I am the most unhappy person in the world.' Saying these words she began to cry, which she did so effectively that the cadi thought she was much afflicted.

'Console yourself, my angel,' he said, 'you have nothing to fear. I am the judge of the Mussulmans, and I shall be able by my authority to impose silence on your parents and your husband. I shall menace them all. I shall forbid them to make any disturbance, and you may be persuaded that they will fear my threats.'

'I do not doubt it, my lord,' replied the young woman, 'so I do not fear the resentment of my husband, nor the anger of my relations. I well know that, supported by you, I am protected from punishment; but, alas! I shall pass for an infamous woman, and I shall be exposed to the opprobrium and contempt of my family. What a cause of grief to a woman whose virtue till now has never been the least open to suspicion! What am I saying, suspicion? I venture to say that I am looked upon as the model of a well-behaved woman. At one blow am I to lose such a splendid reputation?'

At these words she began again to weep and lament so naturally that the judge was grieved.

'O light of my eyes,' he cried! 'I am touched at your grief: but cease abandoning yourself to it, since it is futile. What avails it to weep so much for an inevitable misfortune?'

Dalla Monkhtala interrupted the judge at this moment and said: 'Great cadi of the faithful, and you, beautiful rose of the garden of beauty, listen to me both of you. I have experience, and it is not the first time that I have assisted embarrassed lovers. Whilst you are distressing yourselves I think of the means of getting you out of your predicament, and if my lord the cadi wishes, we will disappoint the lord Banou and my mistress's relations.'

'And how?' said the judge.

'You have only,' replied the old slave, 'to enclose yourself in a certain coffer which is in Arouya's cabinet. I am sure no one will think of asking for the key.'

'Ah! very willingly,' replied the cadi, 'I consent to get into the coffer for a few moments if you think it advisable.'

The young woman said it would please her

very much, and assured the judge that the moment after her husband and her relations had visited her apartments and had retired, she would not fail to come and take him out of the coffer.

On this assurance, and on the promise which the merchant's wife made the cadi to repay with usury his affection for her, he let himself be enclosed like the doctor.

There only remained the governor, who also came at midnight to the door. Dalla introduced him as she had done the two others, and Arouya received him in the same way. She greeted him warmly, and when she saw that the old lord was becoming very joyous she made a sign agreed upon with Dalla, who went out. A minute after loud knocking was heard at the street door, and soon after the old slave entered the apartment precipitately, saying in a terrified manner:

'Ah! madam, what a misfortune! the cadi has just entered. He is being conducted to your husband's apartment.'

'O heaven!' cried the young woman, 'what a fatal event! My dear Dalla,' she continued, 'go gently and listen what the judge is saying to Banou, and come back and tell us.'

The old slave went out a second time, and whilst she was away the governor said to the lady:

'What can bring the cadi here at this hour? Has Banou got some troublesome affair on hand?'

'No,' replied Arouya, 'and I am not less astonished than you at the arrival of the judge.'

Dalla shortly afterwards returned, and said to her mistress:

'Madam, I have lent an attentive ear to the conversation which is going on in the Lord Banou's apartment, and I have heard enough to know what it is about. The cadi has come here to interrogate you in the presence of Danischmend, who accompanies him. The doctor maintains that he has paid you the sequins which your husband lent him. The grand vizir, who has been informed of this affair, has charged the cadi to investigate it this very night, so as to render him an account of it to-morrow morning.'

Thereupon Arouya had recourse to tears, and begged the governor to hide himself, saying, 'My lord, I beg of you to have pity on me. The cadi, Banou, and Danischmend are coming here. Spare

me the shame of passing as a faithless woman. Have some regard to my weakness for you. Enter my cabinet, and permit me to shut you up in a coffer for a few minutes.' As the old lord evinced some repugnance to what was proposed to him, the lady threw herself at his feet, and at last succeeded in persuading him.

The governor was therefore placed in the third coffer.

The merchant's wife closed the cabinet, and went and told her husband all that had passed. After having both rejoiced at the expense of the three unfortunate lovers, Banou said :

'How do you propose ending this adventure ?

'You will know to-morrow,' replied Arouya. 'Only remember that I have promised you that we shall be revenged in a startling way, and be assured I shall keep my word to you.'

The following day she came to my palace and slipped into the hall where I was giving audience to my people. As soon as I perceived her, her noble bearing and the beauty of her figure attracted my attention. I remarked upon her to my grand vizir. 'Do you see that well-built woman ?' I said. 'Tell her to approach my throne.' The

vizir told her to advance. She pressed through the crowd, and came and prostrated herself before me.

'What brings you here?' I asked. 'Rise and speak.'

'O! powerful monarch of the world,' she replied, having risen, 'may your majesty's days be everlasting, or at least only end with the centuries! If you will have the kindness to listen to me, I will tell you a story which will surprise you.'

'Willingly,' I said. 'I am disposed to listen to you.'

'I am,' she continued, 'the wife of a merchant named Banou, who has the honour to be your subject, and to live in your capital. Some years ago he lent a thousand sequins to the doctor Danischmend, who maintains that he never received them. I have been to him to ask for them: he replied that he owed nothing to my husband, but that he would give me two thousand sequins if I would return his love for me. I went to complain to the cadi of the doctor's bad faith. The judge declared he would not render me justice unless I showed him the complacency exacted of me by Danischmend. Confused, and indignant at the

cadi's bad character, I left him abruptly, and addressed myself to the Governor of Damascus, because my husband is known to him. I implored his aid: but I did not find him more generous than the cadi, and he spared no pains to win my love.'

I had much difficulty in believing what Arouya related to me, or rather I suspected her of inventing this fable to do Danischmend, the cadi and the governor a bad turn with me.

'No, no,' I said, 'I cannot believe what you tell me. I cannot persuade myself that a doctor can be capable of denying that he has received a sum lent to him, nor that a man whom I have chosen to distribute justice to the people has made you an insolent proposal.'

'O! king of the world,' said the wife of Banou to me, 'if you refuse to believe my word, you will at least, I hope, believe the irreproachable witnesses I have to all that I tell you.'

'Where are these witnesses?' I replied with astonishment.

'Sire,' she replied, 'they are at my house: send for them I beg. Your majesty will not be able to suspect their genuineness.'

I immediately sent guards to the house of

Banou, who delivered to them the three coffers containing the lovers.

The guards having brought them into my presence, Arouya said to me :

'My witnesses are in these.'

Thus saying, she took out three keys and opened the coffers.

Judge of my surprise, as well as that of the whole court, when we perceived the doctor, the governor and the cadi, all three turbanless, pale, confused, and very mortified at the result of the adventure.

I could not help laughing to see them in this situation, which did not fail to excite also the laughter of all the spectators. But I soon assumed a serious demeanour, and reproached the three in well-deserved terms.

After having publicly reproached them, I condemned the doctor, Danischmend, to give four thousand gold sequins to Banou; I deposed the cadi; and I entrusted the government of the town of Damascus to another officer of my court.

Then, having had the coffers removed, I ordered the young woman to raise her veil.

'Show us,' I said, 'those dangerous features,

the sight of which has been so fatal to the three persons whom they have charmed.'

The wife of Banou obeyed. She raised her veil, and displayed to us all the beauty of her face. The emotion which the occasion and the necessity of remaining exposed to the glances of all my court caused her, added a fresh brilliancy to her complexion.

I have never seen anything so beautiful as Arouya.

I admired her charms, and cried in the excess of my admiration:

'Ah! how beautiful she is! The doctor, the cadi, and the governor no longer appear to me so guilty.'

I was not the only one she dazzled. At the sight of her incomparable beauty, a murmur of applause arose in the court. Everyone had eyes only for her. They could not tire of looking at her and praising her. As I expressed a wish to hear a detailed account of the story she had briefly told to us, she related it to us with so much wit that she increased our admiration still further. The audience-hall resounded with her praises, and those who knew Banou, in spite of the bad state of

his affairs, thought him only too fortunate to have so charming a wife.

After she had satisfied my curiosity, she thanked me for the justice I had done her, and retired home.

But alas! if she was no longer before my eyes, she was continually in my thoughts. Her image was always before me, I could not for a single moment distract myself from it. And at last, seeing that she troubled my rest, I sent secretly for her husband. I had him shown into my cabinet, and spoke to him thus:

'Listen, Banou. I know the situation to which your generous heart has reduced you, and I do not doubt that you feel the chagrin at not being able to live as you have lived till now more than your poverty itself.

'I have resolved to put you again in a position to entertain your friends; you can even spend more than ever without fearing to fall into want again. In a word, I wish to load you with wealth, provided that on your part you are disposed to do what I ask. I have conceived a violent passion for your wife. Divorce her, and send her to me. Make this sacrifice for me, I beg of you, and out of

gratitude, beside all the riches which I will give you, I consent for you to choose the most beautiful slave in my seraglio. I am going to conduct you myself into the apartment of my women, and you shall take the one that pleases you best.'

'Great king,' replied Banou, 'the wealth you offer me, considerable as it may be, cannot tempt me if it is to be bought by the loss of my wife. Arouya is a hundred times dearer to me than all the riches in the world. Judge, sire, of my feelings by your own, and you will see whether I can be dazzled by the brilliant fortune which you offer me. Such, however, is the love I have for my wife, that I am capable of preferring her own happiness to mine. I am going now to find her, and to tell her the effect which her beauty has produced on you, and the offers you have made me to induce me to yield her to you. Perhaps, charmed by so glorious a conquest, she will evince a secret desire to be divorced, and if that is so, I swear that I will divorce her without hesitation, in spite of the affection I have for her. I will sacrifice myself to her happiness, whatever grief her loss may cause me.

As soon as he had left me, he went home to tell his wife of the interview he had just had with me.

'Arouya,' he said, after having told her everything I had proposed to him, 'my dear Arouya, since you have charmed the king, profit by your good fortune. Go and live with this young monarch. He is amiable and more worthy than me to possess you. In making the happiness of his life you will enjoy a finer fate than that of being associated with my misfortunes.'

He could not say these words without shedding tears. His wife was much touched by them.

'O, Banou!' she replied, 'do you think you cause me any joy in telling me of the king's love? Do you think greatness affects me? Ah! undeceive yourself if you have that thought, and believe rather, all unfortunate as you are, that I prefer to live with you rather than with any prince in the world.'

The old merchant was delighted at this speech; he embraced his wife with ecstasy.

'Phœnix of the century,' he cried, 'how you deserve praise! You are worthy to reign over the heart to which you prefer me. It is not just that

so charming a wife should belong to a man like me. I am already far advanced in years, and you are only beginning your fair life. I am only an unfortunate man, and you can, in leaving me, enjoy the happiest of destinies. You have remained too long bound to a man who has nothing in his favour but your virtue. Do not refuse the rank to which love calls you, and without reflecting how unhappy I shall be when I shall have lost you, consent to my divorcing you to make your lot more pleasant.'

The more Banou showed that he wished to give up Arouya to me, the more she resisted. Finally, after a long combat, in which conjugal love gained the day, the merchant said to his wife:

'O, my dear spouse, be content to reign over my heart, since you limit your desires to that; but what shall I tell the king? He awaits my answer, and he doubtless flatters himself it will be such as he would wish. If I go and announce your refusal to him, what have we not to fear from his resentment? Remember that he is a sovereign. You know that he can do everything. Perhaps he will employ violence to obtain you; I cannot defend you against so powerful a rival.'

'I see,' replied Arouya, 'the misfortune which threatens us; but is it not possible to avoid it? Instead of going to the king and irritating him by announcing to him that I decline the honour that he wishes to do me, take all the money which remains to you. Let us take all that we have of value and leave Damascus; let us fly and commend ourselves to the Prophet; he will not abandon us.' Banou approved of this advice, and resolved to follow it.

They had no sooner formed their resolution than they executed it. They left the town that very day and marched towards Cairo. I learnt all that the next day from Dalla Monkhtala, who had not wished to accompany her mistress, and who was brought to me by a confidential man whom I had sent to Banou in my impatience to see him again. If I had been less master of my passions and had wished absolutely to satisfy myself, I should soon have had Arouya in spite of herself in my seraglio—I had only to pursue her; but that would have been committing an unjust action, and I have never cared to constrain the hearts of others.

I therefore left the merchant's wife at liberty

to flee from me and go where she wished, and I set myself to conquer an unfortunate passion, a task which was not less vain than painful. Arouya, in spite of all the efforts which I made to put her from my mind, was ever present in my thoughts. Her beauty and her virtue were ever before me, and for more than twenty years her memory has made me insensible to the charms of the most beautiful of my slaves; the most attractive amuse me without absorbing me.'

'You see, my lord,' then, said the vizir, 'there is no one who is without trouble. The happiest people are those whose troubles are most supportable. Do not let us lament. If neither your majesty, nor the Prince Seyf-el-Mulouk, nor myself are fully satisfied, let us reflect that there are others more unhappy.'

It was thus that Sutlumemé finished the story of the King of Damascus and his vizir. The women of Farrukhnaz, as usual, applauded her. They praised highly the constancy of the lovers whose adventures they had just heard, and the

princess, as was her custom, did not fail to speak against their fidelity.

This did not deter the nurse, who asked permission to relate new stories. She obtained it, and the following day she began thus :

VIII.

The Story of Nasiraddoleh, King of Moussul, of Abderrahman, merchant of Bagdad, and of the Beautiful Zeineb

A YOUNG merchant of Bagdad, named Abderrahman, possessed immense wealth and lived in grand style. Every day were seen at his table the chief officers of the caliph; all the good people of the town were well received by him, as well as the strangers who went to see him. It was his nature to please everybody; were there need of his credit or his purse, he could always be had recourse to without fear of refusal; and people whom he had already obliged did not tire his generosity if they demanded fresh assistance; in the town his benefi-

cence and generosity were the general topic of conversation. His physical qualities corresponded to his mental gifts—he was handsome and very well built; in a word, he passed for an accomplished man. One day he entered a merchant's shop and saw a good-looking young stranger seated alone at a table; he went and sat down beside him, and they began to talk on various subjects. If the stranger pleased Abderrahman, Abderrahman pleased the stranger no less; they were so pleased with one another, that they returned the following day to seek each other on the same spot; they met and had another talk together: they had so much mutual sympathy that from that day they became closely allied. Unfortunately for Abderrahman the stranger was obliged to depart the following day on his return to Moussul, where he said he was born.

'At least, my lord,' said Abderrahman, 'before you depart tell me who you are; I must soon make a journey to Moussul: to whom must I address myself to have news of you?'

'You have only,' replied the stranger, 'to come to the palace of the King of Moussul and you will see me. If you appear there it will give me pleasure

to receive you well; you will know who I am, and there we will cement the friendship which we have formed in this country.'

Abderrahman was distressed at the departure of the stranger, and he only consoled himself with the hope of seeing him again at Moussul, where his affairs required his presence shortly afterwards. He did not fail to go at once to the king's palace; he sought everywhere the features of the unknown whom he loved; when he saw him surrounded by a crowd of eager courtiers, he gathered that it was the sovereign, as indeed it was the King of Moussul, Nasiraddoleh himself. The monarch soon detected him too, and advanced to receive him.

Abderrahman prostrated himself before him, and remained with his face to the ground, until the king, having raised him, embraced him, took him by the hand, and led him into his cabinet.

All the courtiers were very much astonished at the reception which their master gave the young merchant. 'Who is this stranger?' they said one to another; 'he must be a prince, since the king treats him with so much distinction.' The great lords who chiefly enjoyed the confidence of the king began from that moment to fear and hate him,

and the courtiers who wanted favours resolved already to pay court to him.

Nasiraddoleh, however, shut himself up alone with his friend and caressed him many times. 'Yes, my dear Abderrahman,' he said, 'I love you better than all those men whom I have just left to be with you. Ah! have I not reason to cherish you more than them? How do I know that it is not interest or ambition which attaches them to me? There is perhaps not one who loves me for myself. Such is the misfortune of the great, that they cannot be sure they are loved; the good they are capable of doing takes away the pleasure they would have were the recipients disinterested. But I perceive the sincerity of your sentiments; I know their value; you gave me your friendship without knowing who I was; I can boast of having a friend.'

The young merchant of Bagdad replied to the king's kind words in terms full of affection and gratitude, after which the prince said to him: 'As long as you remain in Moussul you will lodge in my palace; you will be served by my own officers, and I shall take care to make the time pass as agreeably for you as possible.' He kept his word, and forgot nothing that he thought capable of

diverting him. Sometimes he took him out hunting, sometimes he gave him instrumental and vocal concerts executed to perfection, and almost every day they ended in debauch.

The Bagdad merchant had spent nearly a year in this manner, when a message came to him from Bagdad that his presence there was absolutely necessary if he wished to prevent his affairs getting into disorder. He spoke to the king of the information he had received, and begged him to permit of his return to Bagdad. Nasiraddoleh consented with regret, and at last Abderrahman tore himself away from the delights of the court of Moussul.

As soon as he had returned home he applied himself very seriously to repairing the mischief his absence had done to his business, and when he had put it straight again he began again to entertain his friends, to do service to everybody, and to spend more than ever. He bought new slaves, and delighted in having some from all nations of the world.

A merchant sold him one one day; she was born in Circassia, and she might well be said to be one of the most perfect creatures that could be seen. She was called Zeineb. He bought her for

six thousand gold sequins; but had he given ten thousand, he would not have paid dear for her. Her extreme beauty was not her only merit; she had a cultivated mind, a sweet and equable disposition, and a tender, sincere, and faithful heart. So amiable a person did not fail to charm Abderrahman; he conceived a violent love for her, and he had the good fortune to find Zeineb disposed to love him as much as he loved her.

Whilst they were quietly enjoying the sweets of their mutual ardour, the King of Moussul came unaccompanied to Bagdad, and arrived at the young merchant's house. 'Abderrahman,' he said to him, 'the wish has seized me to see this town and the caliph's court incognito, or rather I had hoped to see you again. I have come to lodge with you. I flatter myself that you are as pleased to see me as I was to have you in my palace.'

Abderrahman, enchanted with the honour done to him, wished to throw himself at the feet of Nasiraddoleh, to show him how sensible he was of it; but the prince raised him and said: 'Put aside the respect due to the King of Moussul; see in me only a friend who wishes to rejoice with you; let us live without constraint. Nothing is so sweet as

a free life. To taste the charms of it I leave my court from time to time. It pleases me to travel without escort, to mix with private individuals; and I will admit to you, that the days I spend thus are the happiest of my life.'

The young merchant of Bagdad, to obey and please the King of Moussul, adopted a familiar tone with him. They began to live together as if they had been of the same station in life. They made up parties of pleasure every day; and Nasiraddoleh, forgetting where he was, passed the time like a private person.

One evening, whilst they were at table drinking the best of wines, their conversation turned on the beauty of women; the King of Moussul boasted of the charms of some of the slaves of his seraglio, and said there were none to be compared to them in the world. The merchant did not listen quietly to this speech: the love he had for Zeineb and the wine he had drunk did not allow of his agreeing to what he had just heard. 'My lord,' he said to his host, 'I do not doubt that you have very beautiful women, but I do not believe they surpass mine in beauty. I have several slaves who cannot be looked upon without admiration; and amongst

others a Circassian whom Nature seems to have delighted to form.'

'That is to say,' replied the king, 'that you love this Circassian. The praise you bestow upon her proves to me that you are much enamoured of her, without persuading me that she is as charming as my slaves.'

'It is very easy to convince you of it,' replied Abderrahman.

Thus saying, he sent for a eunuch and said in his ear: 'Go and tell my slaves to adorn themselves in their richest clothes and assemble in a well-lit apartment.'

The eunuch ran to fulfil his commission, and Abderrahman sat down again to table, saying to the prince: 'My lord, you will soon see for yourself whether you are right or wrong in thinking that your seraglio contains the most beautiful women of Asia.'

'I confess,' replied the king, 'that I am curious to know whether love does not blind you.'

They continued to enjoy themselves, and they drank until the same eunuch came to say that the slaves had assembled, and that they had forgotten nothing that could accentuate their beauty.

Then the merchant led the King of Moussul into a most magnificent apartment, where there were thirty slaves, young, beautiful, well-made, and all covered with precious stones ; they were seated on sofas of rose-coloured stuff with silver flowers ; some played the lute, others the tambourine, and the others amused themselves with singing whilst waiting the arrival of their master. They rose as soon as they perceived him, and stood in modest silence. Abderrahman ordered them to be seated and to continue to play their instruments ; they obeyed instantly.

The King Nasiraddoleh, great prince that he was, was obliged to admit that he had not more charming women in his seraglio. He began to scrutinise them one after another. He began with the lute-players, who appeared very beautiful to him. He did not find the tambourine-players less agreeable ; and when he came to examine the singers, he saw one whose beauty dazzled him. 'Is that,' he said to the merchant, 'the Circassian you have spoken to me about ?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied Abderrahman, 'it is she ; am I a flatterer ? Have you ever seen anything so beautiful ?'

The merchant awaited the reply of the King of Moussul, which he did not doubt would be very flattering to Zeineb; but he was very much astonished when he saw that the prince, instead of praising the beauty of this slave, assumed a serious and grieved manner, without saying what he thought of her, from which he gathered that the monarch found Zeineb more beautiful than all the women of his seraglio, and was secretly annoyed at it. 'My lord,' he said a moment after, on re-conducting him to his apartment, 'I see that I have presumed too far upon the charms of Zeineb; I have doubtless over-praised them to you.'

Nasiraddoleh replied not to this speech, and when he reached his bedchamber, he begged his host to leave him alone there, because he wished, he said, to rest. Abderrahman retired immediately.

The next morning the young merchant went to the king. He hoped to find the monarch in a pleasanter frame of mind, but he found him so sad and downcast that he was much touched. 'What is the matter, my lord?' he said to him. 'What dark cloud veils your eyes? What is the cause

of the profound melancholy in which you are plunged?'

'Abderrahman,' replied the king, 'I depart to-day for Moussul. I carry with me a grief which time will perhaps only augment; let me go without asking me the reason of it.'

'No, my lord,' replied the merchant, 'you must tell it me; do not hide it from me, I beg of you. I have perhaps been imprudent enough to fail in the respect due to you? I have abused the kindness of a great prince towards me? I have doubtless offended you?'

'God forbid,' replied Nasiraddoleh, 'that I should complain of you! I only lament my evil fate Again,' he continued, 'do not ask what troubles me.'

The more the King of Moussul persisted in concealing the cause of his affection, the more the merchant pressed him to reveal it to him. The prince prepared to depart, with the intention of keeping his secret. But at last his host compelled him by his persistence to reveal it to him.

'Well, 'Abderrahman,' said Nasiraddoleh on parting from him, 'you wish me to speak; I will satisfy you. I love, or rather I adore, Zeineb. I

was not able to see her without being inspired with the fatal love which troubles my rest. I wished to depart without making this sad admission to you; you have dragged it from me; do not be so unfriendly as to reproach me with it. Alas! I shall expiate it only too well by all the pain I shall suffer. Farewell!'

At these words he left his friend and took the road to Moussul.

The speech of Nasiraddoleh strangely surprised Abderrahman, who was a long time recovering himself after the prince's departure. 'Ah! unhappy man that I am,' he cried; 'why did I let the king see Zeineb? Ought I not to have foreseen that he could not look upon her with impunity? He will languish at his court. The women of his seraglio, beautiful as they are, will not be able to make him forget the fatal Circassian who occupies his thoughts. I judge by myself; a heart charmed by her cannot burn with any other love. It will be a reproach to me all my days that I have caused the unhappiness of a king greater by reason of his virtues than by his crown. It is I who have interrupted the course of his life's happiness. As a price of all the marks of friendship

which I have received from him, is it right that I should plunge a dagger in his heart? No! my dear prince, no! Abderrahman will not leave you in the cruel condition he has reduced you to! I am ready to sacrifice myself for you. I will yield Zeineb to you, I am resolved upon it.'

As soon as he had taken this resolution, he called some of his officers and ordered them to prepare a litter. Then he sent for Zeineb and said to her: 'You are no longer mine, you belong to the King of Moussul; it is he whom you saw last night. He has a violent passion for you; he is amiable. You must submit without reluctance to the gift I make him of your beauty.'

At this speech the slave began to cry: 'Is it possible,' she said, 'that Abderrahman abandons me after having so often sworn immortal love for me? Ah! you love me no longer; a new beauty triumphs doubtless over the power of my eyes, and you send me away only to avoid the secret reproaches which my presence would be to you.'

'No, beautiful Zeineb,' replied Abderrahman, quite distressed; 'you have no rival, and I have never loved you more; I swear it by the tomb of the Great Prophet which is at Medina.'

'And if that is so,' interrupted Zeineb, 'why must we separate?'

'It makes me very sad,' he replied; 'but I cannot allow a prince for whom I have the tenderest friendship, and who has given me so many evidences of his for me, to lead a languishing existence. From the moment that it is a question of his peace of mind, I no longer think of my own. When I measure the distance which Nature has put between this rival and myself, there is no sacrifice that I do not think I ought to make; and, moreover, when I think that it is to make you the favourite of a sovereign, this thought, I admit, softens the blow caused me in giving you up. Go, then, and fulfil the happy destiny which awaits you at Moussul; hasten to join Nasiraddoleh, and let joy succeed grief in his heart.'

At these words, during which he shed tears, he ordered the officers he had selected to conduct Zeineb to Moussul to take her away promptly and remove her from his sight, for she was in tears, and appeared so grieved that it was almost more than he could bear. The officers put her in the litter with an old slave who waited on her, and they

took the road which the King of Moussul had taken.

It was in vain that they made haste, the litter went too slowly for it to be possible to overtake Nasiraddoleh, who was mounted on the most vigorous Arab horse. He arrived in his capital several days before Zeineb, who had no sooner arrived there than one of her escort ran to the palace to inform the king that Abderrahman their master had sent him this slave.

It is impossible to describe the surprise and joy of the monarch when he heard this news. 'O, generous friend!' he cried, 'were I not already persuaded that you are the most perfect friend in the world, I could not now doubt it, since you prefer my happiness to your own.'

He sent the chief of his eunuchs to receive her, and had a separate apartment given her, the most comfortable and the most magnificent in the palace. It was not long before she saw the prince appear there. He approached her, and remarking that the expression of her face was sad, 'Beautifu Zeineb,' he said, 'it is not difficult to perceive that your heart does not smile upon the sacrifice which the generous Abderrahman makes me. I see

that you come to Moussul rather as a victim who is led to death than as a proud beauty who sees a sovereign at her feet ; you think more of the loss of a man whom you love than of the conquest of a king who adores you.'

'My lord,' replied Zeineb, 'I ought to be content with the new lot which has befallen me here. I ought to rejoice at being able to give happiness to a prince such as you. I will say more. I should wish to forget the ungrateful man who abandons me, and give you his place in my heart. Why can I not, in order to revenge myself for his treachery, feel from this moment all the love for you that his deceptive ardour has inspired in me for him. But, alas ! unfortunately for me, I think too much of the traitor ! As long as I live he will always be present in my mind, and will unceasingly disturb the peace of my life.' The beautiful slave, saying these words, burst into tears and sobbed so that Nasiraddoleh was deeply touched.

'Ah, charming Zeineb !' he cried, 'moderate your grief, I beg of you, and let me flatter myself at least that time and my solicitude will triumph over it. Do not take from me that hope with which alone I can support life.'

The King of Moussul was not content with saying this to the beautiful slave; he threw himself at her feet, and adding to what he had just said a thousand other tender and passionate things, he made every effort to console her, but could not succeed. He saw, moreover, that the more he combated her grief the more it seemed to increase, so that he retired. He preferred to leave Zeineb to adding to her grief by his presence.

Let us return to the young merchant of Bagdad. After the departure of his beautiful slave he fell into a languor that nothing could dissipate. It was in vain that he joined in pleasure-parties. Zeineb, whom he had always in his mind, would not allow him to be happy. 'Oh, unhappy fellow that I am!' he often said to himself. 'I feel I cannot live without Zeineb: why did I give her up to the King of Moussul? Is it not surpassing the limit of friendship to give up the person one adores to one's friend? Would Nasiraddoleh have done the same for me? No, without doubt, and I am certain he does not know the value of the sacrifice that I have made for him. He thinks I loved my favourite slave indifferently, since I gave her to him without even his asking me for her. What

fortunate lover has ever given up his mistress out of pity for a friend? Yet I love Zeineb as much as one can love. But, alas! what does my grief matter? What is the use of condemning myself? I would do again what I have done, whatever my grief may be at this moment. The prince to whose happiness I immolate my affection is worthy of so great a sacrifice, and he is more worthy than I to possess Zeineb.'

Abderrahman was in this frame of mind: he was in despair at having lost his slave, without repenting of having given her up to the King of Moussul. He had been leading a sad life for three months, when one day they came to arrest him by order of the grand vizir. He was told that he was accused of having spoken disrespectfully of the Commander of the Faithful during a carouse. It was in vain that he protested that not a word that could offend the caliph had escaped his lips: he was conducted to prison. Two lords of the court who were his secret enemies had invented this calumny for his destruction, and on their false evidence the grand vizir had him arrested. It was even ordered that all his goods should be confiscated that very day, his house razed to the

ground, and that the following day his head should be cut off upon a scaffold which should be erected for that purpose before the caliph's palace.

The warder of the prison where he was went during the night to inform him of his sentence. 'My lord Abderrahman,' he then said, 'I sympathise greatly in your misfortune. I am all the more touched by it that I am under an obligation to you. You have twice rendered me assistance when most needed. This is an opportunity for showing my gratitude to you. I have resolved to set you at liberty, and so acquit myself towards you. Leave the prison, the doors are open to you. Fly, and escape the punishment which awaits you.'

At this speech Abderrahman, in a transport of joy, embraced the warder and thanked him for his generosity; then suddenly thinking of the danger which this man ran in setting him at liberty, he said, 'You do not reflect that in saving my life you expose your own. I do not wish to take advantage of your generous instincts; it is not fair that I should let you perish for me.'

'Do not trouble yourself about me,' replied the warder; 'tell me only whether you are innocent or guilty. Have you really spoken disrespectfully of

the caliph? Disguise nothing from me. I must know the truth, and shall act accordingly.'

'I call Heaven to witness,' replied the young merchant, 'that I have never spoken of the Commander of the Faithful but with all the respect due to him.'

'That being so,' replied the warder, 'I know what I shall do. If you were guilty I should fly with you, but since you are not, I shall stay here and spare nothing to make your innocence apparent.'

Abderrahman thanked the warder again, and left the prison. He took refuge with one of his friends, who hid him in a spot in his house where he believed him in safety.

The following day the grand vizir, having heard of the escape of the prisoner, sent for the warder and said: 'Oh, miserable fellow! is it thus you do your duty? You have let a prisoner escape who was in your charge, or rather you have set him at liberty yourself. If you do not find him in twenty-four hours, you will experience the fate destined for him.'

'My lord,' replied the warder, 'I do not refuse to die for him; I will admit that it was I who

released him. I could not endure that he should perish. I have opened his prison doors and advised him to take flight. I confess my crime. I am prepared to expiate it with the death you had prepared for the honestest man in Bagdad, and I venture to say the most innocent.'

'And what proof,' said the vizir, 'have you of his innocence?'

'The avowal made to me by himself,' replied the warder. 'Abderrahman is incapable of lying, but you, my lord, will permit me to say that you allowed yourself to be too easily persuaded. Do you know the young merchant's accusers? Are you sure of their integrity, so that you can believe their word? Are they not, perhaps, the secret enemies of the accused? Do you know that envy and hatred do not arm them against him? Beware of being led away by impostors, and fear to shed innocent blood, for you will one day be obliged to give an account of the power entrusted to you. You will be rewarded if you make only a good use of it, but you will be punished if you abuse it.'

These words, spoken in a firm tone by the warder, astonished the grand vizir, and made

him reflect. He had the warder imprisoned till further orders, and resolved to neglect nothing in order to discover whether the accusers of the young merchant had made their depositions in good faith; however, as he had already razed the house of the accused and confiscated his goods, he did not wish his prudence to be suspected. He ordered the cadi to have Abderrahman sought for in the neighbourhood of Bagdad.

Whilst the cadi's lieutenant was scouring the country with his archers, the young Bagdad merchant remained hidden at his friend's house, and, judging by the care taken to hide him that things were not going well, he feared lest the cadi would come and surprise him where he was, so he formed the design of going to Moussul. 'There,' he said, 'I shall be quite safe, provided that I reach the court of Nasiraddoleh; that will soon make me forget my disgrace.'

As soon as he knew that the archers, tired of searching in vain, had returned to Bagdad, he left it one night, mounted on a very fine horse which his friend had given him, and took the road to Moussul. He made such haste that he arrived there in a very short while. He alighted at the

first caravanserai, where he left his horse, and then he betook himself to the court All the officers of the king recognised him. 'There,' they cried, 'is the stranger whom our monarch cherishes so much. Welcome to him!' In a moment the news of his arrival spread in the palace, and reached the ears of Nasiraddoleh.

The prince sent for his treasurer, and said to him, 'Go and find Abderrahman, and give him from me two hundred gold sequins. Tell him to spend them in his business, to leave my palace, and not to return for six months.'

The treasurer discharged his commission immediately, and the merchant was strangely surprised at it. It was, indeed, a very singular reception to give him, and one he was not prepared for. 'What,' he cried, 'is it thus that the King of Moussul receives a man whom he has not disdained to treat as a friend? Have I done aught to displease him? Alas! I flattered myself that he would always have the same feeling for me, and this hope consoled me for all my misfortunes.'

'Do not distress yourself,' said the treasurer. 'The king still loves you, and if he does not receive

you better, he must have reasons for it. Do as he wishes ; you will perhaps have no occasion to repent of it.'

Abderrahman left the caravanserai not knowing what to think of Nasiraddoleh. 'What does he wish me to do,' he said, 'with two hundred sequins ? I cannot do much business with so modest a sum. Had he given me a thousand gold sequins I might have associated myself with a great merchant and begun a new fortune.'

He took every precaution to make the most of his money ; but application does not suffice for merchants to succeed in their business—they must have luck. If fortune does not second their efforts their labour is lost.

It was in vain that Abderrahman applied himself with fervour : he did not get out of his business what he had put in, so that at the end of six months he had only a hundred and fifty sequins left. He then appeared at the court.

The treasurer came to him from the king and asked him if he still had his two hundred sequins. 'No,' replied the young merchant, 'a quarter of them are gone.'

'Since that is the case,' replied the treasurer,

counting out fifty sequins, 'here is your sum complete. Go and chance it again, and return in six months.'

The merchant was not less surprised at this speech than he was before. 'What is Nasiraddoleh thinking of? Is it thus that he acquits himself towards me? Does he think to pay thus the sacrifice I made to him of all that I held most dear in the world? Should I not be ashamed of having fifty sequins given me? Is it a present worthy of him? I wish, however,' he continued, 'to do what he orders me. I shall return to this palace at the time indicated; but it will be for the last time if I am not differently received.'

He bought fresh merchandise, and began to traffic, which he did with such good fortune that at the end of six months he found he had gained nearly a hundred sequins. He did not fail to present himself at the king's palace.

The treasurer came to receive him, and asked whether he had his two hundred sequins.

'I have nearly three hundred,' replied the merchant; 'fortune has been very favourable to me this time.'

'Since that is so,' replied the treasurer, 'I am

going to conduct you to the king. He will make no difficulty in seeing you.'

At these words he took the young merchant by the hand, and conducted him to Nasiraddoleh's cabinet. As soon as the prince perceived Abderrahman he rose to receive him, and after having embraced him repeatedly, 'Oh, my dear friend!' he said, 'I do not doubt your having been very surprised at the reception given to you. You had reason, I confess, to expect a more agreeable one from me; but do not bear me ill-will, I beg of you. You know that misfortunes are contagious. I heard of your disgrace from a merchant of Bagdad from whom I had asked news of you. I did not dare offer you a refuge in my palace, nor even see you, for fear lest I should incur your ill-fortune, and be incapacitated from serving you when your troubles were at an end. Now,' he continued, 'that misfortune seems to have deserted you, nothing prevents my following the impulse of my friendship. You will remain, henceforth, at my court. I will make every effort to make you forget the troubles you have suffered.'

Nasiraddoleh had an apartment in his palace given to his friend, and nominated officers to

serve him. They passed the first day at table together, and when night had come the king said to the young merchant: 'I wish to acquit myself towards you for the sacrifice you made me of the young slave you loved. I propose to do the same by you. I am going to give to you the one most dear to me of my women; I propose to send her to you to-night on condition that you marry her.'

'My lord,' replied Abderrahman, 'I thank your majesty for your kindness to me; but permit me to refuse the favour you offer me. I can love no woman after Zeineb, and I beg of you not to force me.'

'However absorbed you may be in Zeineb,' replied the king, 'I doubt very much if you will be able to see the person I destine for you without becoming enamoured of her; all that I ask of you is to have an interview with her. If her intelligence and beauty have no effect upon you, I will not press you to marry her.'

'My lord,' replied Abderrahman, 'I consent to see her, since you wish it. However, be assured that, in spite of all her charms, she will not be able to kindle a fresh flame in my heart.'

At last Abderrahman retired to his apartment,

where he had no sooner arrived than the chief eunuch, accompanied by a veiled lady, appeared and said :

'My lord, here is the person whom the king, my master, wishes to give you. She is the most beautiful of his women. He could not make you a more valuable present.' Thus saying he made a profound reverence to Abderrahman, left the slave, and went out.

The young Bagdad merchant saluted the lady very politely, and begged her to seat herself on a large fine brocade sofa trimmed with gold embroidery.

She sat down. He placed himself beside her, and said :

'Oh you, who beneath this veil represent the sun enveloped in a thick cloud, listen to me, I pray. I am certain the king's project alarms you. You doubtless fear that, prompt to profit by his generosity, I am going to attach your fate to mine by immortal bonds ; but cease to fear that I shall do you this violence. I love Nasiraddoleh too much to take from him an object he adores, and moreover, I confess I am little affected by the sacrifice which the prince wishes to make me. As I have

not looked upon your charms, this avowal cannot offend you.'

He was silent after having said these words, and he awaited the slave's reply, when all of a sudden she burst out laughing. Then she raised her veil, and the merchant recognised in her his dear Zeineb.

'Oh, my princess!' he cried, in a transport of joy and surprise, 'it is you whom I see!'

'Yes, my dear Abderrahman,' she replied, 'it is your Zeineb who is given back to you. The King of Moussul has not been less generous than you. As soon as he knew all my love for you, and saw that it did not yield to his attentions, he ceased pursuing me, and he has for a long time kept me here only to give me back to you.'

The beautiful Zeineb and the young merchant passed the night in testifying to each other the mutual joy they had in seeing each other again, and at the manner of their meeting.

The following morning Nasiraddoleh came to their apartment. They both threw themselves at his feet to thank him for his kindness.

He raised them and said, 'Happy lovers, taste at your ease the pleasures of a perfect union here

at my court. To unite your hearts more closely, I am going to command preparations to be made for your marriage. If I cannot cease to love Zeineb, my love shall at least only show itself in the favours I propose heaping upon you.'

He did not content himself with giving them large pensions; he assigned them more than two thousand acres of land exempt from all charges. To crown his happiness, Abderrahman received pleasant news from Bagdad. He learnt that one of his accusers, impelled by remorse, had gone and revealed everything to the grand vizir, who, on his deposition, had had the other accuser put to death, had pardoned the warder, and declared the accused innocent. Hearing this, he journeyed to Bagdad, and went to the vizir, who gave him back a part of his wealth; but he gave it all to the warder who had so generously saved him, and he returned immediately to Moussul, where he passed the rest of his days in peace and happiness.

Sutlumemé here finished the story of Nasiraddoleh, of Abderrahman, and Zeineb. The women of Farrukhnaz praised very highly the generosity of the young merchant and the King of Moussul, but

Farrukhnaz remarked that the constancy of the beautiful Circassian was much more meritorious than that of her lover.

'Oh, my princess!' said Farrukhnaz, 'since you seem to love the character of faithful people, I will, with your permission, relate the story of Repsima. I do not think the story will weary you.'

The princess's women showed such a desire to hear this new story that Farrukhnaz permitted Sutlumemé to relate it.

IX

The Story of Repsima

A MERCHANT of Bassora, named Dukin, abandoned his profession to give himself up entirely to piety. He had always been very scrupulous, and in consequence had amassed very little wealth. He lived in a small house at the extremity of the town, with an only daughter, whom he brought up in the fear of the Most High, and in the practice of Mussulman virtues. They both fasted, not only on the prescribed days, but often on others for the sake of mortification.

All their time was spent in prayer and reading the Koran. They lived contented with their lot, and wanted for nothing because they desired nothing.

Careful as was Repsima (for thus was the daughter of Dukin named) to avoid men and

to live regardless of the things of the world, she was, nevertheless, soon troubled in her solitude. Her virtuous reputation attracted many men, who asked her in marriage of her father, and she would have had a greater number of lovers if it had been known that her beauty equalled her virtue.

Dukin, when he reflected upon the meagreness of her fortune, hoped his daughter would marry some rich merchant; but she evinced such aversion to marriage that he did not dare to force it upon her for fear of doing violence to her feelings.

'No, my father,' she said, every time a suitor presented himself; 'I do not wish to leave you. Let me live my tranquil life with you.'

They both lived together for some years in the manner I have described, after which Dukin was summoned by the Angel of Death. Repsima, seeing herself bereft of her father's support, raised her hands to Heaven and spoke thus: 'Sole hope of the despairing, unique resource of orphans, Heaven, who dost not abandon the unhappy who implore thy aid with confidence, thou who listenest to the voice of the innocent, do not refuse my prayer! Thou art all-powerful, thou canst preserve me; re-

move from me all the perils which threaten my innocence.'

After the funeral of Dukin, all the family represented to Repsima that it would be unseemly for her to live alone, and that she must marry. At the same time a young merchant named Temim was proposed to her, whose goodness and honesty they extolled. She could not at first entertain ideas so distasteful to her; but having in prayer consulted the Great Prophet, she believed herself inspired, and nothing further was needed to prevail upon her to marry Temim. The marriage took place shortly afterwards.

She found in her husband, besides the good that had been told her of him, a man disposed to love her passionately. Temim became every day more and more attached to her, and, charmed at having a wife of such rare merit, he considered himself the happiest of men. But, alas! his happiness was not of long duration. Tremble, mortals, when you think your wishes realised! The moment destined to be the last of your happiness is perhaps not far off.

Temim, a year after his marriage, was obliged to make a voyage along the Indian coast. He had

a brother, whom he entrusted with the care of his domestic affairs.

'Revendeh,' he said to him, 'my dear brother, keep Repsima good company during my absence, take care of my wealth. I will not say more to you. I judge of you by myself. I believe my interests are not less dear to you than your own.'

'Yes, my brother,' replied Revendeh, 'you are right in having entire confidence in me, and there is no need to recommend your interests to me. Blood and friendship will not admit of my neglecting them.'

On the assurance which Revendeh gave Temim that he would take great care of his house, he departed from Bassora, and embarked on the Gulf in a vessel bound for Surat. As soon as he was gone his brother went to his house and made endless protestations of wishing to serve Repsima, who received him very well.

Revendeh, unfortunately, became desperately enamoured of his sister-in-law. He concealed his love for some time, but gradually he lost control over himself and declared his love. The lady, although incensed at her brother-in-law's audacity, spoke to him gently and begged him not to speak

of it again. She represented to him the insult he did to Temim, and how poor a result he could expect from such guilty sentiments.

Revendeh, seeing that his sister-in-law took the matter so gently, did not despair of influencing her, and became more bold:

'Oh, my queen!' he said, 'all that you can say to me is useless: listen to me rather, and accept my proposals. I will become your slave to death. Let us be in harmony, and our friendship so secret as to shelter us from slander.' At this speech Repsima could not restrain her anger. 'Ah, wretch!' she cried, 'you only think of hiding your crime from the eyes of the world: you only fear to be dishonoured among the people: you are not at all affected by the wrong you do your brother, and Heaven, who sees into your soul. But cease flattering yourself: I would rather die than satisfy your criminal passion.'

Another, less brutal than Revendeh, would perhaps have reflected at these words, and have esteemed Repsima the more.

But he, seeing that he could not persuade her, resolved to bring about her destruction in revenge. This is how he set about it One night, whilst she

was praying, he secretly introduced a man into Temim's house. This man quietly entered the lady's room. Then Revendeh, followed by four paid witnesses, broke in the door of the house, and running to where his sister-in-law was, 'Unhappy woman!' he cried, 'I surprise you with a man. Is it thus you dishonour my brother? I have brought witnesses, so that it will avail you nothing to deny your crime. Wretched woman! you affect the appearance of the most austere virtue, whilst you secretly commit the most infamous actions.' Thus saying he made so much noise that he awoke all the neighbours and made the affront public.

By this sinister artifice Revendeh made his sister-in-law appear unfaithful. He did not content himself with that; he ran to the cadi with his four witnesses, informed him of the adventure, and demanded justice of him. The judge immediately interrogated the witnesses, and on their depositions charged his lieutenant to go and seize Repsima and imprison her till the following day.

The lieutenant carried out the order, and the next day the accused was condemned to be buried alive on the high-road. This rigorous sentence was executed. The victim was conducted to a

place outside the town by a great concourse of people, and she was buried up to her breast in a ditch, where she was left.

As the people returned to the town they discussed the wife of Temim. 'It is a calumny,' said some; 'the matter has been judged too quickly: this woman appeared so good and virtuous.' 'One must not trust,' said others, 'to appearances: this woman has been justly condemned.' So each one argued according to his character.

Repsima was left in the position I have described on the high-road, when, in the middle of the night, an Arab robber passed near her mounted on a horse. She cried out to him. 'Passer-by,' she said, 'whoever you may be, I beg you to save my life. I have been unjustly buried alive. In the name of God, have pity on me and deliver me from the cruel death which awaits me; this good work shall not go unrewarded.'

The Arab, robber though he was, was touched with compassion. 'I must,' he said to himself, 'save this unhappy creature. I have a thousand crimes on my conscience; this charitable act will perhaps dispose the Most High to pardon me.'

Thus reflecting, he dismounted, approached

Repsima, and after having extracted her from the ditch, he remounted his horse and made the lady get up behind him.

'My lord,' she said, 'where are you going to take me?'

'I am going,' he replied, 'to take you to my tent, which is not far from here. You will be in safety there, and my wife, who is the best woman in the world, will receive you well.'

They soon arrived at an Arab encampment. They dismounted at the door of a tent, which was opened by a negro. The robber made the lady enter, and presented her to his wife, whom he told how he had met her. The Arab's wife was naturally charitable, and it was with regret that she saw her husband pursue his calling as a robber. She received Repsima favourably, and begged her to relate her history.

The wife of Temim told her story so touchingly that she moved her hearers. The robber's wife was especially affected by it. 'My beautiful lady,' she said to Repsima, with tears in her eyes, 'I feel your troubles as much as you do yourself, and you may depend upon me to render you any service in my power.'

'My good lady,' said the wife of Temim, 'I thank you for your kindness. I see that Heaven does not wish to abandon me, since I am brought in contact with people who sympathise with my misfortunes. Permit me to live with you. Give me shelter, where I may pass my days in praying for you.'

The Arab's wife led her into a little room and said to her: 'You will be quite at peace here; no intruders will come and interrupt you at your prayers.' It was a great consolation to Repsima to have found this retreat. She gave thanks to Heaven without ceasing. But, alas! her troubles were not at an end; many other misfortunes happened to her.

The negro who served in the Arab's tent, and whose duties were to groom the horses and to lead the cattle to and from the pasture, cast a profane eye upon Repsima. 'How beautiful she is,' he said, 'and how sweet would be my lot if I could make her love me!'

Calid, although he was one of the most frightful monsters of his species, did not despair of becoming a happy lover. This hope and the beauty of the beloved object augmented his love to such a degree

that he resolved to declare it on the first favourable opportunity.

It soon offered itself. He seized it one day when the Arab and his wife were out. He entered Repsima's chamber. 'I have,' he said, 'waited long for the moment in which I might be able to say to you that I am dying for love of you. I am about to die if you do not return my love.'

'Oh, wretch!' she replied, 'how could you think you would attract my attention? Were you the handsomest and best made of men, your mad ardour would meet with no response, and you flatter yourself with the hope of pleasing me! Leave me; I only look with horror upon you. If ever,' she continued, 'you speak to me again of love, I shall inform your master, who will punish your insolence.'

She said these words in such a firm tone of voice that he knew he had no chance of making such a conquest. As he was not less malignant than Revendeh, he thought to revenge himself upon the woman who despised his love; but he set about it in a very strange manner. The Arab had a child in the cradle, and this son was the joy of its father and mother. One night Calid went and cut off this child's head, and carrying the dagger

with which he had done this barbarous action into Repsima's room, he placed it under the bed of the lady whilst she slept. Moreover, he dropped blood from the child's cradle as far as the innocent woman's bed, as he wished suspicion to fall on her ; and he even sullied her robe with blood.

The following morning, when the Arab and his wife perceived the child in the state in which the negro had left it, they uttered frightful cries, tore their faces, and put cinders on their heads. Calid ran to them and asked the cause of their grief, as if he had not known it. They showed him the cradle bathed in blood and their lifeless son. At this spectacle he feigned an extreme grief, he tore his clothes, uttered wild cries. 'Oh, unparalleled misfortune! Oh, detestable treachery! If I did but know who had dealt the blow! If at this moment I did but hold in my hand the author of so horrible a crime, I would tear him in pieces. But,' he added, 'it can, I think, be discovered. We have only to follow the bloody traces of the murder.'

At these words his master and he followed the drops of blood, which led them to Repsima's room. The negro drew from under the bed the dagger he

had put there, and pointed out to the Arab that the lady's clothes were all covered with blood. Then he said: 'Oh, my master! you see in what manner this unhappy woman repays your kindness to her.'

The Arab was extremely amazed when he saw that he had indeed occasion to suspect Repsima of having committed so cruel an action. 'Oh, wretched woman!' he said, 'is it thus that you observe the laws of hospitality? Why have you shed the blood of my son? What had this poor innocent child done to arm your hand against it? Inhuman woman! the services I have rendered you deserved to be rewarded differently.'

Thus saying he melted into tears, and gave way to despair.

'Oh, my dear lord!' said Calid to him, 'should you speak thus to this miserable stranger? Do you content yourself with reproaching her? Plunge rather the fatal dagger into her breast which she has used to destroy your only son. If you do not wish to revenge yourself, let me avenge you. I will punish the wretch who is bathed in a child's blood.'

Thus saying, he took the dagger and was about to plunge it into the heart of Repsima, who

was so amazed that anyone should dare accuse her of so dark a deed that she remained in perfect silence. She had not the strength to speak to justify herself, and the negro was about to strike when the Arab stayed his arm.

'What are you doing?' said Calid to him. 'Would you prevent my punishing a wicked woman, who does not recognise the laws of hospitality? Let me remove from the face of the earth a monster who will commit other crimes if spared now.'

At these words he raised his arm a second time to deliver a mortal blow to Repsima; but the Arab again restrained him and forbad him to kill her. In spite of his despair and that appearances were against the wife of Temim, he could not believe her guilty. He wanted to know what she would say to justify herself. He asked her why she had assassinated the child. She replied that she knew nothing about it, and began to weep so bitterly that the robber had pity on her.

The negro perceived this, and in spite of the prohibition his master had made against his striking the lady, he wanted to stab her. The eagerness

he displayed to kill her displeased the Arab, who ordered him to retire.

'Go, Calid!' he said to him; 'your zeal carries you too far: I will not have this woman's life taken. I believe her innocent in spite of appearances.'

The robber's wife, deeply as she felt her son's death, also could not persuade herself that Repsima was guilty of the crime imputed to her. 'It were better,' she said to her husband, 'to send away this woman without harming her than to kill her without being certain of her guilt.'

The Arab agreed, and said to Repsima, 'Whether you are innocent or guilty, I can no longer shelter you here. Every time my wife and I saw you we should remember our son, and every day the sight of you would renew our grief. Leave this tent, and go and choose a refuge where you wish. You should be thankful to me for my moderation. Instead of taking your life I even wish to give you money to live on.'

Repsima extolled the justice of the Arab, and said to him that Heaven was too just not to reveal to him one day the author of the crime. Then she thanked him for his kindness to her. But

when he presented to her a purse containing a hundred gold sequins, she said, 'Keep your money, and leave me to Providence; it will have care for me.'

'No, no,' he replied, 'I insist on your taking these sequins; they will not be useless to you.'

She accepted them, and after having begged the robber's wife not to think ill of her, she left the Arab habitation.

She walked all day without resting, and at the beginning of the night she arrived at the gates of a town not far from the sea. She knocked by chance at the door of a small house where a good old woman lived, who opened the door and asked what she wanted.

'Oh, mother!' replied Repsima, 'I am a stranger. I have just arrived in this town; I know no one in it. I beg you to be charitable enough to receive me into your house.'

The old woman consented and gave her a little room.

Then the wife of Temim, taking out of her purse a sequin, gave it to her hostess and said:

'Here, my good mother, go and get provisions for our supper.'

The old woman went out, and returned shortly afterwards with some dates and preserves, and they both began to eat. After supper Repsima related her story to the old woman, who was much touched by it: then they went to bed.

The following day Temim's wife wished to bathe: the old woman accompanied her. When they were on their road, they saw a young man whose hands were tied, and who had a rope round his neck: the executioner was leading him to punishment, and a crowd of people were following him. Repsima asked what crime the young man had committed: she was told that he was a debtor, and that the custom of the country was to hang those who did not pay their debts.

'And how much does he owe?' said Temim's wife.

'He owes sixty sequins,' they replied; 'if you pay for him you will save his life.'

'Very willingly,' she replied, drawing out her purse. 'To whom must I give the money?'

The cadi was immediately informed that a young lady offered to pay for the debtor.

The creditor was summoned. Repsima counted out sixty sequins to him, and the young man was

immediately set at liberty. All the people, charmed at the stranger's generosity, were anxious to know who she was, so that instead of going to the public baths she took leave of her old hostess, and left the town to escape the importunate curiosity of the inhabitants.

However, the young man who had just escaped from death sought out his deliverer to thank her. And when told that she had left the town, he inquired what route she had taken, and followed her. He came up with her on the edge of a fountain, where she had stopped to rest; he saluted her very respectfully, and offered to be her slave in order to show his gratitude.

'No,' she said, 'I do not wish you to buy so dearly the service I have done you; you are not so indebted to me as you imagine. It is not out of love for you that I saved you from death; it is solely for the love of the Most High.'

Whilst she was speaking thus the young man had his eyes upon her, and, struck by her great beauty, he became enamoured of her. He declared his love on the spot, and, persuaded that he would not find a better occasion, he threw himself at the feet of Repsima, and conjured her in the most

passionate terms to respond to the ardour she inspired in him; but the chaste wife of Temim, instead of seeing with pleasure a lover at her feet, was enraged against him, and treated him with no more favour than the negro: 'O wretch,' she said, 'you know that without me you would not be alive at this moment. Your life would have been taken, and yet you dare attack my fidelity; you are even insolent enough to speak to me of your love.'

'Beautiful lady,' replied the young man, 'I did not think to insult you when I expressed to you all the sentiments which gratitude, and the sight of you aroused in my heart. Is it such a great insult to you to tell you that you have charmed me?'

'Silence, wretch,' interrupted Repsima, 'do not think you can prevail upon me to listen to you; it is in vain that you hide your sinister design under respectful words, I can easily detect it beneath your flattering speech. Go, fly from me, and do not force me to regret the service I have done you.'

The manner in which she spoke made the young man see that he had nothing to hope for. He rose without saying anything, and went towards the sea-shore.

He saw a vessel stop, the crew of which were landing; they were Bassora merchants who were going to Serendib; he approached them and asked for the captain.

'I have,' he said, 'a perfectly beautiful slave whom I wish to sell; she does not love me; I have resolved to get rid of her; I left her at the edge of a fountain near here, buy her, I will sell her to you very cheap. I will give her to you for three hundred sequins.'

'I take you at your word,' replied the captain, 'provided she is young, and as beautiful as you say.'

Thereupon the young man led the captain towards the fountain, where Repsima after her ablution was engaged in prayer. The captain had no sooner seen her than he counted out three hundred sequins to the young man, who took his way back to the town.

The captain who had just bought Repsima approached her, and said, 'O ravishing beauty, I am enchanted at what I have just done. I have seen many slaves, I have bought more than a thousand in my life-time, but I must admit that you surpass them all. Your eyes are more

beautiful than the sun, and your figure is above compare.'

If this speech surprised Repsima, she was much more astonished when the captain put out his hand to her, saying:

'Come, my princess, I am going to take you on board, and put you in a room on the poop. We shall be setting sail in a minute, we will make the voyage to Serendib together, and on our return to Bassora you shall be the mistress of my wealth and of my house, for I do not propose to sell you. If I have bought you from this young man, whom you do not love, it is in order to make you the happiest person in the world. I shall show you all possible affection and consideration.'

At these words, to which Repsima listened very impatiently, she interrupted the captain:

'What are you saying?' she cried, 'I have never been a slave, I am free, and no one has the right to sell me.' Thus saying, she abruptly repulsed the captain's hand.

He was naturally abrupt and violent, he was shocked at the way in which she received the pleasant remarks he thought he was making to her. He suddenly changed his tone.

'What, little creature,' he said, 'is it thus you speak to your master? I have bought you with my money, you are my slave, I shall take you whether you will or no.' Saying these words, he took her in his arms, and in spite of her resistance, he carried her off as a wolf does a sheep that has wandered from the fold. It was in vain that the air resounded with her cries, he put her on board, and soon the vessel set sail.

The captain left Repsima to herself for some days, but seeing that she regarded him with no more favour however tender he was to her, he lost patience and insisted one day that she should be responsive to his love. She found herself in no way disposed to yield to the entreaties of her master, who, losing patience, was about to treat her very harshly, when a terrible storm arose. In a moment so furious a wind sprung up that the masts, rigging, and sails were carried away.

The sailors did not know what to do, and the pilot, abandoning the ship to the mercy of the wind and waves, cried:

'O passengers, if any one of you has committed crimes, and violated the laws of the Prophet, let

him ask pardon of Heaven ; there is no time to lose, we are all about to perish.' The tempest indeed increased, and the vessel, after fighting for a few moments against the waves, was at last submerged.

All the persons on board perished, excepting Repsima and the captain. They both saved themselves on a plank, and were washed ashore each in a different spot. The wife of Temim was carried by the waves on to the shore of a thickly populated island, governed by a woman.

By chance a great number of the inhabitants were on the sea shore. When they perceived Repsima in the water and saw her cast up on their island they looked upon it as a miracle. They all surrounded her and asked her a thousand questions.

To better satisfy their curiosity she related her adventures to them, and conjured them to grant her a refuge where she could live in peace. The inhabitants, charmed with her beauty, intelligence, and virtue, gave her a refuge where she passed several years in prayer.

The inhabitants of the island admired the austerity of her life exceedingly. They talked

only of the stranger and the purity of her life, she even soon became their oracle. When some among them wished to make a long journey, or formed any other enterprise, before executing it they did not fail to go and consult her, and she predicted their fortune. Finally, she gained the esteem of everybody; or, rather, she was looked upon as a divinity. The queen of the island conceived so much friendship for her, that, thinking she could not do better than make her queen over her people, she declared her her heiress with the approval of all the inhabitants. The queen was very advanced in years; she soon died. Repsima was somewhat reluctant to take her place, but the people forced her to it, and they had no occasion to repent of it, for she made them so happy that they afterwards blessed the shipwreck which had cast her on their shores.

As soon as she was on the throne she applied herself entirely to the government of the State. She selected vizirs as upright as they were enlightened, and she took particular care to render justice to every one. She spent in prayer every moment that her duties as queen allowed her. She fasted, and the more she saw herself honoured by men,

the more she humiliated herself before the Omnipotent. When anyone fell sick and had recourse to her, begging her to pray Heaven to cure them, she redoubled her prayers and the Lord granted them. The inhabitants of the kingdom could not hold out against the miracles they witnessed. They renounced the worship of the sun and embraced Mahomedanism. She established the sacred laws, and had mosques built on the ruins of idolatry.

She also had hospitals built for the poor, and caravanserais for the strangers who came to the island. She spent great sums in providing these places with every necessary, and soon the sick of all nations were seen arriving on the island, seeking the relief of their ills on the strength of the queen's reputation.

One day they came to tell Repsima that there were six strangers in a caravanserai, who asked to speak to her, that one of them was blind, another partly paralysed, and another dropsical. She ordered them to be brought to her immediately; at the same time she seated herself on a magnificent throne. She had on her one hand fifty or sixty slaves richly dressed, and on the other all the great people of her court.

When the strangers arrived at the palace two lords conducted them before the queen, whose face as well as those of all her slaves was covered with a thick veil. The strangers prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground until Repsima ordered them to rise. Then she asked them what they wanted of her, and whence they came.

One who spoke for the others replied, 'O great queen, may God make your armies to triumph, may the earth obey you, and Heaven be favourable to you. We are unfortunate sinners, and we come here to obtain through the intercession of your majesty the pardon of our sins by the Almighty.'

'Speak more clearly,' replied the queen, after having scrutinised them. 'I can do nothing for you unless you publicly relate your adventures without suppressing any detail.'

'Princess,' replied one of the strangers, 'you must be obeyed. I am a merchant from Bassora. I married a girl who was without parallel in the world; she was perfectly beautiful, gentle, and virtuous. Being obliged to travel one day, I left her in my house, mistress of her actions. I begged my brother, the blind man whom you see here, to

look after my domestic affairs. On my return he told me that he had detected my wife in sin and that she had been buried alive, that this event had grieved him so much because of me, and that he had wept over it so much that he had lost his sight. That, great queen,' he added, 'is my story. I therefore beg you very humbly to give back my brother's sight. It is to pray this of you that I have come and have brought him here.'

Temim, for it was he who spoke to Repsima without knowing her, here ceased speaking. He awaited the answer of the queen, who was so surprised to see her husband there that she could not immediately reply to him, but having recovered from her agitation she said: 'Is it true that the woman who was buried alive was unfaithful to you? What do you think?'

'I cannot believe it,' replied Temim, 'when I recall all her virtues. But, alas! I have a great confidence in my brother, and that makes me doubt her innocence.'

When the Bassora merchant had spoken thus, the queen said: 'That is enough; I know better than you whether your wife has been justly condemned. I will let you know to-morrow and we will see

whether your brother can recover his eyesight.' A man in company with Temim then spoke thus: 'I have a negro slave whom I bought and have brought up from infancy. He has been partly paralysed for years, no doctor can cure him; I bring him here to recommend him to your majesty's prayers.'

After the queen had heard this speech, and knew that the man who had addressed her was the Arab robber with whom she had lived, and that the paralytic was the very black slave who had tempted her virtue, she said: 'That is enough, I am well informed on the subject that brings you, it can be decided to-morrow. And you,' she said turning towards another, 'what is your malady?'

'O queen!' he replied, 'I do not know to what to attribute my malady, if it is not to the violence I wished to do to a beautiful slave whom I bought some years ago from a young man who sold her to me on the sea-shore.'

The queen, at these words, recognised him as the captain to whom she had been sold. She did not show that she knew him any more than the others, and she let him continue thus. 'I look,' he added, 'upon my misfortune as a punishment from Heaven.'

'And I,' cried one of the strangers, 'I look upon the fits from which I suffer from time to time as a well-deserved punishment for having sold you the slave whom you took on board against her will. I am still more guilty than you, for she was a free woman to whom I owed my life, and in return I gave her over to you and placed her in slavery.'

From this Repsima knew that the man who had just spoken was he whom she had saved from death for sixty sequins. Then she said to the six strangers, 'I will pray for your relief. Return to your caravanserai and return to-morrow at the same time. The blind man and the paralytic may be cured provided they make a sincere confession of the crimes they have committed. I know their adventures; but I demand of them to be sincere and not to introduce any false detail into their story, for they will repent it. Instead of interesting myself in them, I shall punish them very rigorously.

'As for the others,' she continued, 'I promise from this moment to pray for them, for they have already told the truth.'

The six strangers returned to their caravanserai. Four were already very pleased. The brother of Temim and the black slave alone were sad. They

would have preferred remaining all their lives in the plight they were in, than be obliged to make a public confession of their treachery and their brutality. They tried to conceal their grief from the eyes of those whom they had offended; they passed a sleepless night.

However, the following morning, they were obliged to follow the others. They all went to the palace, and appeared before the queen who was on her throne as on the preceding day. 'Well!' she said, as soon as she saw them, 'are the blind man and the paralytic resolved to disguise nothing? Woe to either of them who does not tell the truth.' Then the negro advanced full of shame and terror, as he saw it would do him no good to lie, he resolved, at the risk of all that might happen, to make a clean breast of all that had passed with regard to Repsima. He confessed that he had conceived a violent passion for the lady, and that seeing himself rejected, in order to bring about her destruction, he had determined to kill the Arab's only son.

When the negro had confessed all. 'This,' he said, 'is my crime, and Heaven is witness that I repent.'

'Ah, traitor,' cried the Arab robber in a transport of rage, 'so it is you who robbed me of my only son? O queen,' he added addressing Repsima, 'permit me to cut off his head immediately. A wretch who is capable of committing the crime he has confessed, is not fit to live!'

'No,' replied the queen, 'I do not wish you to take his life.'

'I understand, princess,' replied the Arab, 'you justly oppose my rage. It were better this wretch should remain paralytic. Death will end his troubles only too soon.'

'You are mistaken,' replied Repsima, 'it is not in order to prolong his troubles that I wish him to live. Since he repents of his crime, we must pray the Most High to pardon him.' Then she prostrated herself at the foot of the throne, and the body of the negro was seen immediately to resume its vitality.

All the spectators were surprised at so marvellous a thing, and praised God and the queen a thousand times. She also prayed for the man with dropsy and for the epileptic, and both these men were perfectly cured.

Then Temim, not doubting that his brother

would recover his eyesight, said to him: 'O Revendeh! it is for you to speak; the queen is only waiting for that to work a fresh miracle in your favour.'

'Yes, but,' said Repsima, 'let him relate his story, and beware of saying what is not true, for I know all his adventures, and if I detect the least falsehood, punishment awaits him.'

Revendeh, judging by these words that if he persisted in keeping silence, or if he dared to lie, he would be punished on the spot, resolved at last to confess everything. As he sincerely repented of having betrayed his brother, and believed his sister-in-law to be dead, he gave a very touching story of his treachery without seeking to exculpate himself. When he had finished speaking the queen said:

'He has been very sincere, and has advanced nothing out of conformity with the truth.'

Temim, at these words, which revealed to him all his brother's malignity and Repsima's innocence, uttered a great cry and fell down in a swoon. Some of the queen's officers ran to his aid, and when he had recovered his senses, he prostrated himself before the throne and said: 'O my princess! permit me to conduct my treacherous

brother back to Bassora. I do not ask for him to be cured, I only desire his death. I wish to conduct him to the very place where my wife has been buried alive and there assassinate him. His crime is too black to be pardoned.' The queen remained for some time without answering, because she was weeping behind her veil, so touched was she at the state her husband was in. When she had dried her tears, she addressed him thus: 'O merchant of Bassora! I conjure you to moderate your anger for my sake. Your brother has, indeed, committed a great crime; but since he publicly confesses it, remember you are both of the same blood, and let him off the punishment you wished to inflict on him.'

At these words Temim replied: 'It is for your majesty to command. You wish me to forgive him. I consent to do so provided that he sincerely repents and never accuses anyone falsely again.' Hardly had the Bassora merchant told the queen that he forgave Revendeh than the princess, with her face to the ground, prayed Heaven to restore his sight to the blind man. Her prayer was heard; at that moment Revendeh's sight was restored.

At this spectacle the applause was renewed.

All the assembly began again to praise God and the queen, who sent the strangers back to their caravanserai, saying : 'Return here to-morrow, you may see things which will surprise you more perhaps than those which have astonished you to-day.' The following day they did not fail to return to the palace. The queen called Temim and made him sit upon a gold chair which she had had placed beside the throne for this purpose. Then she said to him : 'O merchant of Bassora, you have suffered much grief and pain. I enter into your misfortunes, and in order to help you forget them, I have resolved to give you the most beautiful of my slaves in marriage, and you shall remain at my court, if you wish.'

Instead of accepting the queen's proposal, Temim began to weep, and said to the queen : 'Your majesty overwhelms me with favours and I am grateful for all your kindnesses, but I beg you not to be angry with me if I refuse the offer you make me of the hand of one of your slaves ; as long as I live no other woman but Repsima can occupy my thoughts. My dear Repsima is ever present in my mind. I cannot console myself for having lost her, and I am resolved to go and spend the

rest of my days in lamentation on the spot where she has been so unjustly buried alive.'

Repsima was enchanted to find her husband so faithful, and, charmed at his refusal of the young slave, she said: 'If I prayed the Almighty to bring back to life the woman whose loss grieves you so, would you be very glad to see her again, and if you saw her would you recognise her?' Thus saying she lifted her veil and Temim recognised Repsima.

His joy at meeting his wife could only be equalled by the astonishment of the other strangers at recognising in the queen the features of the person they had insulted. The princess embraced Temim, and related her adventures in the presence of all the lords of her court, who wondered at them. Then she had ten thousand ducats, with a rich brocade vest and a magnificent robe for his wife, given to the Arab robber; a thousand ducats to the captain, and as many to the young man who had sold her. After that she rose from her throne, took Temim by the hand and led him into her cabinet, where they both commenced to thank Heaven for having brought them together again. Then Repsima said to her husband: 'Since the laws of the kingdom do not permit of my de-

spoiling myself of the royal authority to vest you with it, you will, at least, remain in my palace, and will share with me a pleasant life, and we will make your brother as happy as he could wish.'

Revendeh soon became prime minister, and acquitted himself so well of his task that he gained the esteem and friendship of all the inhabitants of the island.

X

The Story of the Two Travellers

THE following day Sutlumemé said, 'Allow me to tell you a little story which proves that travelling is not altogether dangerous.' Farrukhnaz was willing, and the slave began thus:

Salem and Ganem were friends, and were making a several days' journey together. One day they arrived at a high mountain, and in skirting its base, they found a fountain, the water of which was fresh and excellent. Near the fountain was a canal of water, bordered and shaded by cypresses, pines, and plantains, which flowed in the midst of a meadow strewn with flowers, and which made the place still more agreeable. All these delights invited the two travellers to stop there and take a little rest, in order to recover from the fatigues

of crossing a dreary desert. They chose a suitable spot, where they seated themselves on the grass. After they had rested some time, they walked round the fountain and along the canal. They approached the place where the water of the spring fell into a large basin, and on the edge of it they perceived a piece of white marble ornamented with azure characters so well formed that it was easy to judge of the skill of the workman who had carved them.

The inscription ran thus; 'Traveller, who honour this spot with your presence, we have a magnificent lodging in which to receive you if you will be our guest, but on condition that you swim across this canal, without fearing its depth or the rapidity of the current.

'When you have reached the further bank, you will take the marble lion which lies at the foot of the mountain upon your shoulder, and, without hesitation, you will carry it without pausing to the summit, without regard to the roaring lions you may meet or the thorns on your path. This done, you will be happy for ever. Without walking, rest is not obtained. He who does not work does not obtain what he wishes. The light of

the sun fills the whole universe: the least delicate and the more determined receive and endure its keenest and most ardent rays.'

Having finished reading, Ganem said to Salem, 'Come, let us surmount the danger put before us. Let us try and see whether the promise of the talisman is genuine: let us see what will happen to us.'

'Dear friend,' replied Salem, 'there would be little sense in exposing oneself to so evident a danger on the strength of a simple writing which promises a very uncertain happiness. A reasonable man would not risk his life for so imaginary an advantage as that, and a wise man would not court present and visible danger for a non-apparent pleasure. Believe me, a thousand years of delight are not worth a moment's risk of one's life.'

Ganem was not influenced by these maxims. 'Comrade,' he replied, 'the desire to live at one's ease without risking anything is the precursor of a contemptible and ignominious life: but the road to glory and happiness is through danger. He who gives way to effeminacy tastes neither the joy nor pleasure of having suffered, and he who fears headache denies himself the sweetness of good wine. He who has courage does not limit his

happiness to the leading of a penurious and miserable life.

'True repose is that which superiority over one's fellow creatures gives one. Let us deliberate no longer.

'It is not less to our honour than to our interest not to continue our journey until we have climbed to the summit of this mountain, in spite of the rapid current, in spite of the lions and the thorns. We shall suffer somewhat, but after that we may hope that in reward for our troubles and the deserts we have crossed we shall find beautiful countries.'

'Do as you wish,' replied Salem; 'for myself, I cannot help saying that it is not less foolish to undertake what you propose than to wish to cross a desert, the extremity of which one is not certain to find soon, or to embark on a sea the shores of which are never to be found.

'In whatever enterprise one undertakes one should always know how one will come out of it, and how to begin so as not to work uselessly and not to expose one's life, which we ought to cherish more than anything else in the world. Listen to the words of a sage, who says:

'"Wherever you are about to step never put out your foot without having well tested the spot on which you wish to place it, and seeing that the egress is sufficiently large."

'Moreover, perhaps this writing is not very correct, or it has been put there simply for amusement and to take advantage of the simplicity of fools; mayhap, too, the water is not to be passed, and it is not possible to gain the other shore. Even if you could cross, perhaps when you have crossed you will find the stone lion so heavy that you will not be able to even lift it from the ground. But, supposing you can lift it, are you sure of being able to carry it without stopping to the summit of the mountain? And after all you do not know what so many difficulties will lead to. For myself, I declare that I have not joined company with you in order to share a danger of this nature. All I can do is to conjure you to abandon, as I do, so ill-conceived a design.'

Ganem still resisted Salem's arguments. 'I cannot,' he said, 'listen to your prayer, and nothing can prevent my carrying out the resolution I have taken. Neither demons nor spirits shall deter me by their warnings. I know you did not join

me on this journey in order to follow me in this, and I see you do not wish to oblige me so far. Come at least and approach only to see and accompany what I am going to do with your prayers and your vows. Let me remind you of what a poet says: "I know that you are not given to drinking wine; nevertheless, do not mind coming into the wine-shop to see the drinkers with their glasses in their hands."'

When Salem saw that Ganem was resolved, he said again to him: 'From this jest which offends me I recognise that you are not affected by my counsels, and that you will not desist from your intention, which has no good foundation. I do not feel equal to witnessing the carrying out of it. Besides, I am not curious to witness a spectacle to which I have a natural repugnance. So I will let you alone and avoid what would give me pain to see.'

So saying, he bade farewell to Ganem and continued his journey.

When Ganem was alone he approached the canal. 'I must,' he said, 'plunge into this sea either to perish in it or to bring out of it the pearl I hope for.'

Thus resolved, he plunged into the water, which was very deep and very rapid; but he acquitted himself so well in this courageous attempt that he landed happily on the other bank. He drew breath, took the marble lion on his shoulders and ascended to the summit of the mountain without pausing, notwithstanding the difficulties he encountered and the weight of his burden, which he put on the ground on reaching the top.

On the other side, at the foot of the mountain, Ganem perceived a beautiful town, the suburbs of which were scattered with well-built country houses with large gardens, which were charming to look upon. The marble lion suddenly uttered so terrible a cry that the mountains shook and the surrounding country re-echoed. At this cry, which was heard in the town, the inhabitants came crowding out and advanced towards the mountain, which caused Ganem no less astonishment than the cry of the lion. The more prominent and distinguished among them advanced at the head of the others and made profound obeisance to Ganem and complimented him highly, wishing him every prosperity. Then they presented to him a beautiful horse richly caparisoned. He mounted it, and

they escorted him to the town with all the people who had come to meet him. They conducted him to a magnificent palace, and made him enter a rose-water bath, after which they rubbed him with essence of musk and amber. They finally clothed him with a royal mantle, proclaimed him their king, and did homage to him.

Until now Ganem had not thought anything extraordinary of the honours done to him, he had looked upon them as a result of the singular consideration on the part of this people towards strangers, but when he saw that they proclaimed him king, he asked the reason of the choice which they had made of him to command and reign over them.

'Sire,' replied one of the heads of the people, 'the ancient philosophers of this country have placed a talisman on the fountain which you have seen, drawn up beneath constellations made according to the rules of their art. When any brave man, after having swum across the water, carries the marble lion to the summit of the mountain —which only happens when the king of this town and State is dead—the town, as your majesty has seen, goes out to meet him on the roaring of the

lion, and places him on the throne in the place of the deceased. For a number of years and even centuries this custom has been in usage amongst us.'

At this speech Ganem knew that all the troubles and difficulties he had encountered had been so many steps to arrive at this great good fortune, and that when fine actions have glory for their object, glory on its side takes all the steps necessary for their reward.

'From this adventure,' added the slave, 'you can easily conclude that pleasure is only enjoyed after hardship. It is a maxim as old as the world, and you will find it in every book on morals.'

XI

CONCLUSION

The Story of the Princess of Cashmere

THE nurse related many other stories, doubtless less memorable than those we have chronicled, since the memory of them has not come down to us.

She had been amusing the princess for a thousand and one days when Farrukrouz fell ill. The king, Togrul Bey, who loved his son tenderly, sent for the most skilful physicians in Hindostan, but they could not cure him. The consternation which his dangerous malady spread at court suspended all amusements. The Princess of Cashmere would hear no more stories. Togrul Bey ceased hunting. The prince alone occupied their thoughts, everyone trembled for his life.

One day the king, who often went to see the high priest of the temple, said to him: 'You know that I love my son better than life. The

doctors have exhausted all their art without being able to restore his health. I expect nothing from their remedies, and I have recourse to your prayers. I flatter myself with the hope that through your intercession I shall obtain what I desire.'

'Everything is to be hoped for,' replied the priest, 'when one implores the mercy of Heaven. I am going to pass the night in the temple, I shall pray Heaven to intercede for the prince, and to-morrow I will tell you whether my prayers have been granted.'

The following day the priest went to Togrul Bey, who, full of impatience, advanced to meet him. 'Well, holy dervish,' he said, 'have you obtained the recovery of my son?'

'Yes, sire,' replied the priest. 'The Prophet has asked it of the Lord, who has been gracious enough to grant it.'

At this answer the king, seized with joy, embraced the holy man, and conducted him himself to the apartment of the prince Farrukrouz.

The dervish sat down beside the bed of the sick man, and said a prayer in a voice full of mystery.

He had barely finished than the prince, who had

long lost the power of speech, uttered a cry and said: 'O my father, be consoled, I am cured!' At these words he rose, and in the town of Cashmere they spoke only of the holiness of the high priest.

Farrukhnaz could not hear the praises of so devout a person without wishing to see him and converse with him. To do this, she left the palace accompanied by her eunuchs and her women, and went to the monastery of the priest; but she was very surprised when they came to tell her that the high priest forbad her to enter. The princess, annoyed at this rebuff, went immediately to complain to the king, who wished to know the cause of it. He went to the chief priest, and asked him why he had made a difficulty about receiving a visit from Farrukhnaz.

'My lord,' replied the dervish, 'it is because the princess is not obedient to the Most High; she flies from men, she looks upon them as her enemies and lives in idleness. Unless she changes her views it is not permitted to me to speak to her. Heaven has forbidden me to do so, but,' he added, 'if she corrects herself I will do her every service in my power.' The king, having nothing to reply to this speech, returned to his seraglio.

Some days after, Togrul Bey went again to visit the dervish, who said, 'I have at last obtained from Heaven permission to speak to the princess. I wish to exhort her; perhaps I may put her in the way of salvation.' The king, enchanted that the holy man had taken this resolution, informed Farrukhnaz, who the very next day did not fail to present herself at the gate of the monastery and ask for the holy dervish. The porter made her enter, and conducted her by order of the high priest into a great hall, where he begged her to wait a moment.

On the wall in three different places were seen painted a doe caught in a trap and a stag who was making every effort to deliver her, and in one place only was represented a stag caught, and a doe who looked at it in the trap without troubling to help it. The princess looked upon these pictures with astonishment.

'What do I see?' she said. 'Just Heaven, here is the opposite to my dream! These three stags make every effort to deliver the does, and I perceive a doe forsaking a stag. What am I to think of these? Ah! I am doubtless mistaken in my estimate of men! They are more grateful than I

thought. How sorry I am to have done them this injustice.'

Whilst the princess was reflecting thus, the high priest entered the hall gravely. She wished to throw herself at his feet; but he prevented her, and having made her sit down, he said, 'O Farrukhnaz, the king your father is very distressed to see you influenced by sentiments so contrary to nature and the laws of the Lord. You are in the power of the demon; it is he who has prejudiced you against men. I have prayed the great Prophet to have pity on you; but in spite of his power, do not think that he can extract you from the abyss you have fallen into if you do not make some effort on your part to get out of it.'

The dervish perceiving that the princess now began to weep, so frightened was she at this speech, said to her: 'My daughter, dry your tears! I see your heart is changed. I promise to snatch you from the demon, provided that you yield to my advice.'

Farrukhnaz promised to do all that he prescribed for her, then she kissed the holy man's hand and returned to the palace.

The following day she returned to the monas-

tery, and when she was alone with the dervish, he said: 'Princess, I have seen the great Prophet to-night in a dream. He said to me: "O religious man, Farrukhnaz is no longer hated by the Most High; she has no longer a bad opinion of men. But she must have pity on a young prince who burns and languishes for her night and day; for the Almighty has written on the tablet of predestination that she shall be his spouse."'

The princess was astonished at these words. 'How can I,' she said, 'relieve the young prince if I do not know who he is?'

'The Prophet,' replied the high priest, 'tells me that he is the Prince of Persia; that he is called Farrukschad; that he is so handsome, so charming, that no mother ever gave birth to so perfect a man.'

'Oh, my father,' replied Farrukhnaz, 'what you say surprises me. Can a young prince who has never seen me be enamoured of me?'

'I will tell you,' replied the dervish, 'how that is; for the Prophet, who foresaw all the questions you would ask me, took care to instruct me in all the details; so that, to satisfy your curiosity fully, I will tell you that the Prince Farrukhschad dreamt that he saw you in a meadow. Charmed with

your beauty, he wished to declare his love to you ; but you left him abruptly, saying that all men were but traitors. The pain your disappearance caused him awoke him ; but far from seeking to put this sad dream from him, he took pleasure in dwelling upon it. It was always in his thoughts, and although hopeless of possessing your charms he cherishes the memory of them.'

At this speech of the high priest the Cashmerian princess sighed deeply, and raising her eyes to heaven : 'O God,' she cried, 'is it possible this prince can have dreamt the same dream as myself! Holy dervish,' she continued, 'the Prophet has not told you everything. I also dreamt that I saw, in a meadow scattered with every kind of flower, the handsomest prince in the world ; that he made me a declaration of love which I received ill. But whilst ill-treating him I felt that my heart began to interest itself in him, and I was obliged to fly precipitately from him for fear lest his good looks and flattering speeches triumphed over the hatred I had for men. This hatred was the effect of another dream, to which these pictures give the lie. I recognise my mistake ; I think better of men. I believe them capable of friend-

ship; and if it is the will of Heaven that I marry the Prince of Persia, I submit without repugnance.'

The high priest was charmed to hear the princess speak thus, and, profiting by her present disposition: 'My daughter,' he said, 'I wish to pass the night in the temple, and consult Heaven as to what you must do to obtain the realisation of your wishes; I will tell you his answer to-morrow.'

Farrukhnaz retired, thinking much of the Prince Farrukhschad. She recalled perpetually to her memory the dream in which he had appeared before her so amorously; and the more inclined she felt towards him the more charming she depicted him to herself. She was very uneasy the rest of the day, and she could not sleep a wink all night.

As soon as the day dawned she rose to go and find the dervish, who saw immediately that she was somewhat disturbed. She did not wait for him to tell her Heaven's answer. 'Well, my father,' she said; 'has Heaven ruled my destiny? Has it made known to you what is exacted of my obedience?'

'Yes, my daughter,' replied the holy man; 'the great Prophet has spoken to me. He wishes

you to take an oath to do all that I am going to order you.'

The princess swore that she would execute his orders exactly.

'We must,' he said, 'depart to-night. I will lead you to the State of the prince who loves you, and who will endow you with a crown richer than that of Cashmere. You are doubtless astonished that I should propose an elopement, but the Prophet wishes it.'

'What!' interrupted Farrukhnaz, very surprised; 'he orders me, without telling the king, my father, to leave the court of Cashmere to go and seek a prince who is not yet my husband!'

'I do not say that,' replied the high priest; 'Togrul-Bey will know of your departure. I undertake to get his consent; but the Prophet thinks it expedient that things should be done thus in order to make you expiate your pride.'

'This step,' replied the princess, 'is not to my taste, I confess; however, I am ready to follow you, provided that my father consents.'

'I answer for his consent,' replied the dervish; rely on me for that. Return to the palace and prepare to depart.

Farrukhnaz did what the holy man prescribed, and he went shortly afterwards to the king. He found Togrul Bey talking to the princess's nurse. As soon as the king saw him appear, he said to him: 'Approach, holy dervish, you are welcome! We were speaking of the quick change that has taken place in the heart of my daughter: you are responsible for this wonder. She hated men: you have in a moment triumphed over this hatred. One conversation with you has done more than all the stories of Sutlumemé.'

'Sire,' replied the high priest, 'I have gone further; Farrukhnaz not only no longer hates men, she is even enamoured of the Prince of Persia.'

Then the dervish related all that had passed between the princess and himself, and declared the wishes of the Prophet.

Togrul Bey, after having reflected some time, said to the high priest: 'I regret to see my daughter obliged to depart thus, but since the Prophet commands, I shall take care not to oppose it. Moreover, she will be under your escort; I need fear nothing.'

The king consented to the departure of

Farrukhnaz, who left Cashmere that very night, with her nurse and the dervish only; for the holy man assured the princess that the Prophet wished her to make the journey unaccompanied.

They were all three on horseback. They travelled all night without stopping; they arrived at daybreak in a meadow where a thousand varieties of sweet-smelling flowers rejoiced the eye. The meadow bordered on a garden, the walls of which were of white marble. At one end of the wall rose a cabinet of red sandal-wood, with a gilt balcony, and below flowed a stream of the finest water in the world, which ran through the meadow and watered the flowers. The beauty of the place inviting them to stop, they dismounted, and seated themselves on the bank of the stream.

They were charmed with such a delicious spot; but whilst they were admiring it the dervish suddenly changed colour. His face became deadly pale, and his body trembled. Farrukhnaz and her nurse, alarmed at this change, asked the reason of it.

'O my princess,' replied the dervish, casting terrified glances on the daughter of Togrul Bey, 'what demon has brought us here? This cabinet

above us, this meadow, the walls of this garden all announce to me that this is the redoubtable dwelling of the magician Mehrefza. If she sees us, we are lost. Alas! I call Heaven to witness that I tremble only for you: if I were alone, I would form a great project, and I feel courageous enough to carry it out.'

'Do,' said Farrukhnaz, 'as if we were not with you. If our evil destiny is to perish here, at least I will fulfil it with firmness worthy of my noble blood.'

'Ah, beautiful princess,' cried the dervish, 'your firmness dissipates all my fear. I am going to acquire immortal glory or die. Remain here; if I do not return in an hour, it will be a certain sign that I have not succeeded in my project.'

Saying these words, he drew his sword and entered the magician's garden. After his departure, Farrukhnaz and her nurse felt terribly agitated.

'Ah! unhappy dervish,' said Farrukhnaz, 'what will become of you? I fear lest you lose your life.'

'My princess,' said Sutlumemé, 'fear nothing. Can a priest of the temple succumb beneath a magician's blow? No; however perilous may be

the enterprise he has formed, do not doubt but that he will come out of it happily.'

Indeed, at the end of an hour they saw him return. He approached them laughing, and said:

'Thanks to the Almighty, Mehrefza can hurt us no longer, and our sojourn here, which the cruel woman made terrible by her magic, has nothing but pleasures to offer us. But it is time, beautiful princess, to let you know who I am. Do not look upon me any longer as a dervish, as the head of the temple of Cashmere; see in me the confidant of the Prince Farrukhschad. I will tell you his story and mine in a few words; after that we will enter Mehrefza's palace, where you will be received as you deserve, and where you will see things which will surprise you.

'The great king who to-day rules over Persia, and whose court is at Shiraz, has as his heir an only son named Farrukhschad. One day this young prince fell ill. His father, who loves him tenderly, was alarmed at it; he sent for skilful physicians, who all said, after having observed Farrukhschad closely, that his illness was such as he himself alone could explain.

'The king pressed him to tell the cause of it,

but not being able to drag his secret from him, he sent for me.

'"Symorgue," he said, "I know my son hides nothing from you; go and see him, get him to open his soul to you, and do not scruple to come and tell me afterwards what he has said to you."

'"No, sire," I replied, "as he is ill only because he persists in silence as to the subject of his trouble, I shall take care not to tell it to you. I am too interested in him to betray him thus."

'"Go and speak to him, then," replied the king, "I await your return with much impatience."

'I ran to the prince's apartment. He evinced much pleasure at the sight of me, and reproached me saying:

'"O my dear friend, I have a complaint against you. Since I have been ill, I have not seen you; why have you delayed so long in coming to see me? I have received endless importunate visits; alas! yours alone could be agreeable to me in my present condition."

'"I was out hunting," I said to him, "and I have only just arrived. But what ails you, prince? How is it that your complexion has partly lost its brilliancy?"

'"Symorgue," replied the prince, after having sent all the officers out of his room, "I have never had a secret from you; far from wishing to conceal the cause of my illness from you, I was only waiting to tell it you. Would you believe, my friend, that the condition in which you see me is caused by a dream?"

'"Heavens! what are you saying?" I cried in surprise. "Can a dream have made so much impression on so reasonable a mind?"

'"I foresaw your astonishment," replied Farrukhschad, "but I confess my weakness to you. I hide it with care from everyone, and it is to you alone that I can make such a confidence. Listen, then, to the strange cause of my trouble. I dreamt I was in a meadow all strewn with flowers; there appeared a young lady more beautiful than a houri. I could not resist her charms, I prostrated myself at her feet, I confessed my love to her; but, instead of listening to me, the inhuman creature said to me in a contemptuous manner: 'Go your way, men are traitors; for I saw in a dream a doe who, after having by her efforts disentangled a stag from a snare, herself fell into another, and the stag, far from helping her in his turn, was ungrate-

ful enough to abandon her. I judge by that of the hearts of men; I believe them all to be ungrateful, and I have renounced their love.' "

'" I wished," pursued the prince, " to take up the cudgels for men and to undeceive her; but the cruel woman left me. 'Ah! my goddess,' I cried out, 'say rather that it is the doe who abandons the stag.' Saying these words, I lost sight of her, and awoke. This, dear friend, is the fatal dream which troubles the repose of my life. I know that were I reasonable I should dwell no longer upon this dream."

'" No, my lord," I interrupted, " you must not efface it from your mind. I, like you, begin to lend myself to these agreeable phantoms; I believe them to be less formed by sleep than by some favourable genie who has wished to put before you the features of the princess whom Heaven destines to be your wife. Come, my prince, let us wander from kingdom to kingdom in search of this person; we may be able to find her, and see her more really than you have done. I shall tell your father that your trouble comes only from a violent desire to travel, and I am sure he will permit you to satisfy your desire."

'Farrukhschad, enchanted by this speech, embraced me, and I left him to go and give the king an account of this interview. I repeated to him word for word all that the prince had said to me. Then I added: "I did not combat the illusions which trouble him: I flattered them rather, and I perceived that my sympathy relieved him much. To complete his cure, your majesty must permit him and me to travel; it is the way to banish Farrukhschad's melancholy, and make him forget the chimera which occupies him." The king agreed with me, and ordered a magnificent equipage for the prince his son, who, followed by a large number of officers, soon left Shiraz with me.

'After a somewhat long and uncertain journey we arrived at the town of Gazuine, where there reigns an old king who loves his subjects as much as they love him. This good old man sent the captain of his guards to meet Farrukhschad to testify to him the joy his happy arrival caused him, and to beg him to excuse him at the same time for not being able to leave his palace to go and receive him.

'My prince received the captain very graciously, and asked him for news of the king's health.

'"My lord," said the officer to him, "the king my

master is sick with grief. He has recently lost his only son, who was a prince of great promise; he has not yet consoled himself for the loss."

'We were much touched, and we went to the king's palace. He paid every imaginable honour to Farrukhschad, and, seeing in him some resemblance to his son, he could not help shedding tears.

'"What do I see, my lord?" said my prince to him. "Does the sight of me draw tears from you? Am I unfortunate enough to recall a sad memory to you?"

'"Yes, my prince," replied the king; "the likeness between you and my son renews my grief; but I look upon you as another child whom Heaven has sent me to console me for the loss of the other. I begin already to feel for you part of the love I had for him. Stay, I beg, with me; hold the rank he held at my court, and you shall be my heir."

'Farrukhschad thanked the king for his kindness, and resolved to make a long stay at Gazuine, more out of sympathy for the old monarch than to assure to himself the throne which he offered him.

Every day the grief of the old king was seen to

diminish; he became every day insensibly more attached to the Prince of Persia, who could not live without him. One day, whilst they were both talking, Farrukhschad asked of what malady the Prince of Gazuine had died.

'"Alas," said the king, "the cause of his death is very extraordinary; it is love which laid him in the tomb. Listen. My son had heard tell of the Princess of Cashmere, and from the portrait given him of her he became enamoured of her.

'"I immediately sent rich presents to the King Togrul Bey by an ambassador, who asked for the princess his daughter for my son. The King of Cashmere replied that he held my alliance in great honour, but he had sworn by Heaven that he would not marry his daughter against her will; that this princess hated men mortally, and that this aversion was the result of a dream; that one night she had dreamt that a doe, after having delivered a stag from a snare in which he was caught, had got herself caught, and that the stag had been ungrateful enough to refuse to help her; that since this dream she looked upon men as so many monsters whom women should avoid. My ambassador brought me back this answer, and my unhappy son, losing

hope of marrying the Cashmerian princess, fell into a decline, which carried him off in spite of the remedies my doctors gave him."

'Farrukhschad did not hear this story without agitation. If he had the consolation of thinking that his dream was not a delusion, on the other hand the rigour of the princess made him fear the fate of the Prince of Gazuine. The king perceived his agitation. "O my son," he said; "why are you troubled? You seem to me quite beside yourself."

'"My lord," replied the prince, "I have left my country only because of this inhuman princess."

'Then he related his dream, and the king having listened said, sighing: "Just Heaven! why must my life be a tissue of troubles and annoyances? I brought up my son with extreme care; I lost him, and when I begin to console myself for his loss a new trouble comes to me. O strange fate! But, my dear Farrukhschad," he continued, "take courage, do not give way to your melancholy; it is not impossible to conquer the aversion which the Princess of Cashmere has for men. Alas! my son's trouble was not without remedy! If he had had the patience to await the result of the strata-

gems which might have been employed he would not now be dead."

'The King of Gazuine, after having given some hope to the Prince of Persia, went to find his vizirs who awaited him in the council; and Farrukhschad, impatient to see me, sent for me, and related all he had just heard.

'"Oh! my dear prince," I then said, "your happiness is assured, since we know the name of the princess. If the king will permit me, I will go to the kingdom of Cashmere. I undertake to bring you the object of your desires. Do not ask me how I propose to succeed, for I do not know myself; I shall act as it seems best."

'The prince, enchanted to see with what confidence I promised to make him happy, embraced me, and we passed the rest of the day in rejoicing.

'The following morning I took leave of my prince, and, with the permission of the King of Gazuine, I departed for the kingdom of Cashmere, well-armed and mounted on a very fine horse. After several days' march I found myself in this meadow, on the side from which one sees the palace whither I am soon going to conduct you. Charmed with the beauty of the place, I

dismounted, I let my horse graze, and I sat down under a leafy tree, on the border of a fountain, the pure and transparent water of which invited refreshment. I could not help drinking it, and I then sat down on the grass and fell asleep.

'On awaking I perceived five or six white does with saddle-cloths of blue satin and gold rings on their feet. They came to me; I began to caress them, but in doing so I noticed that they shed great tears. That surprised me, and I did not know what to think of it, when, turning my eyes towards the palace, I saw at a window a charming lady who made a sign to me to approach. I immediately left my horse in the field, and I advanced to join her, although the does seemed to wish to prevent me by biting the edge of my robe and even putting themselves in front of me.

'Astonished by the action and tears of these animals, I reflected at the time that there was perhaps some underlying mystery, but the pleasurable anticipation overruled my prudence and carried me away. I arrived at the palace gate, I entered. The lady, who seemed to me far more beautiful near than from afar off, received me with favour, took me by the hand, conducted me to a

superb apartment, and made me sit down with her on a sofa. After the first compliments several slaves brought fruit in a porcelain basin. The lady took the finest, which she presented to me. But hardly had I tasted it than her face changed suddenly and she said to me: "Bold stranger, experience the punishment meted out to all those who like you are bold enough to enter the palace of Mehrefza. Leave your natural form and take that of a stag: lose the use of speech, but retain human understanding in order to feel your misfortune for ever."

'She had not finished these words before I found myself changed into a stag. At the same time a green satin saddle-cloth was brought which she herself placed on my back. Then I was led into a great park where there were more than two hundred other stags, or rather men whose misfortune it had been to be attracted to this spot and whom the cruel Mehrefza had also changed into stags.

'I had leisure to reflect upon my misfortune which I felt less for my sake than because of Farrukhschad. "Alas!" I said to myself every moment, "what will become of my dear prince?

How can he obtain the accomplishment of his desires? He is waiting for me to bring him the princess whom he adores, and he will never see me again." I was continually absorbed in this reflection, which caused me great grief.

'One day I saw eight or ten ladies enter the park, amongst whom was a perfectly beautiful young person, who, by the wealth of her attire, seemed to be the mistress of the others. She had with her a governess, to whom she said, on seeing all the stags: "Indeed I pity all these unfortunate creatures very much. How inhuman is the Princess Mehrefza, my sister! Heaven has given us both very different inclinations. Unceasingly engaged in tormenting the human species, she seems to have learnt magic only to make people miserable, and I, if I possess any secret powers, I have never put them to any bad use, I only employ them to secure the welfare of others. It pleases me to do charitable actions, and I feel inclined to do one to-day since my sister is absent. Go, my good mother," she added, "and fetch me one of those stags and bring it to me in my apartment." Saying these words, she re-entered the palace.

'The governess took me by chance and led me to her mistress, who ordered one of her women to go and pick a certain herb which she named and bring it to her. The girl promptly executed the commission and returned with a great handful of this herb. The lady took half of it, which she crushed herself, and made me swallow the juice of it. Then she said these words: "O young man, forsake the form of a stag and resume your natural shape." I immediately became what I was before. I threw myself at the feet of the lady to thank her. She asked me my name and my country, and what had brought me to the kingdom of Cashmere. I answered all her questions without reserve.

'When I had finished speaking, she said to me: "I am the daughter of a prince of the court to which you wish to go. I am called the Princess Ghulnaze; she who has changed you into a stag is my eldest sister and is called Mehrefza; she is a magician of redoubtable power. I alone could deliver you out of her power, and although I am her sister, if she perceives what I have just done I fear I shall experience her anger; but, happen what may, I shall never repent of having released you from

your position. I intend you to be still further under obligation to me; I wish to help you make the prince your friend happy. I admit it is very difficult to secure his happiness, because, in order to do that, you must gain the confidence of the princess whom he loves, which you can only do by passing as a holy person at the court of Cashmere."

'"What are you saying, my princess?" I cried. "How am I to get that reputation?"

'"You have only to follow exactly the instructions I give you," she replied. Thus saying she went to a wardrobe, whence she brought out a dervish's dress, a girdle, and a little ebony box. "This," she said, "is all that is necessary for you to succeed in your enterprise. Take these and go towards the town of Cashmere, which is not very far from here; but before entering, stop, remove your garments and rub your body all over with the grease which is in this box. Then you will take this dervish's dress, and this magic girdle with which you will bind your loins, after which present yourself at the gates of the town. You will find guards there who will say to you, 'O venerable religious, whence do you come?' Answer, 'I am a priest and I come from the extremities of the

West on a pilgrimage to Cashmere to see the great temple.' You know," she added, " that this temple is a celebrated building revered by the people of that kingdom. As soon as you have told them that you have come from so far to see this temple, they will throw themselves at your feet, and will conduct you with respect to the king, Togrul Bey, who will place you in the hands of the chief priest, Ahran, head of the temple of Cashmere. This high priest and all the other ministers of the idol will conduct you to the temple, which for beauty and magnificence is above all the palaces in the world, but it is surrounded by a ditch twenty feet deep, filled with water which boils without the aid of fire, and beyond the ditch there is a border of steel blades, red-hot, so that the temple seems inaccessible. Then Ahran will say to you: ' O phœnix of the century, you have passed through many dangers and fatigues before arriving here. The great temple, for which you have made so long and painful a journey, lies before you. But you cannot enter the sanctuary. You have only to offer your adorations from here, and then you will return to your country.' You will reply to this speech that you have come to

see the temple and that you wish to visit it. But the chief priest will tell you that in order to have that honour you must pass through the boiling water and cross the border. You will then utter a cry of joy and will go forward boldly. The grease with which you have rubbed yourself has the virtue of making the water harder than stone, and will prevent your being burnt. When you have entered the temple you will worship Heaven therein for a whole day; then you will rejoin Ahran, who will adopt you as a son. You will spend fourteen days with him, and the fifteenth, whilst he is asleep, you will rub his nose with a white powder I am going to give you. He will no sooner have smelt it than he will die, and the king will make you chief priest in his place. When you have attained this dignity, you will go and see the Prince of Cashmere, who has been ill for some time, and given over by the doctors. You will breathe a prayer over him, and he will be immediately cured. The rumour of his cure will be spread throughout the peoples of Hindostan, who will look upon you as a saint, and Farrukhnaz, the Princess of Cashmere, charmed with your reputation, will wish to see

you. I do not tell you the rest, it depends upon your skill."

'I promised to follow accurately the instructions of Ghulnaze, who put in my hands another little box containing the white powder, and a folded paper on which was written the prayer which I was to say over the Prince of Cashmere.

"Depart, my lord," she said to me; "leave this palace immediately. I fear my sister may return. Alas!" she added, sighing, "the harm she may do me for having destroyed her magic is not what I most fear!"

'I thanked Ghulnaze again in terms of deep gratitude. We were both very pleased with each other, and we would have wished to be longer together, but as we feared Mehrefza might come and surprise us, we were obliged to separate. I then took the road to Cashmere. As soon as I was near this town I dressed myself in the dervish's costume, after having rubbed my body with the grease which I had in the ebony box. I then presented myself at the gates; the guards led me to the king, who put me in the hands of the chief priest. I crossed the water and the border of steel blades without harm to myself; then I

entered the temple, where I saw the Sanctuary and worshipped Heaven therein.

'I stayed in the temple until the following day. Then I went to seek out the head of the temple priests, who adopted me as his son and kept me about him. Finally, for fear of losing the fruit of all my pains by omitting any detail, I got rid of Ahran in the manner prescribed by Ghulnaze, and became high priest in his place. I shortly afterwards cured the Prince Farrukhrouz, which gave me such a high reputation that you wished to see me. You know the rest, and what impression the pictures had on you which I had had painted in the hall where I received you. I watched you before showing myself, and I perceived that they gave you much to think about. This, charming Farrukhnaz,' added Symorgue, 'is what I thought I ought no longer to leave you in ignorance of. Forgive the artifice I have had recourse to in order to remove from you the false opinion you had of men, and in order to bind your lot with that of the most amiable of princes.'

The Princess of Cashmere blushed at this story, which showed her how deceived she had been,

but the love she felt for the Prince of Persia prevented her being angry with the false dervish.

'Finish telling us what you have done,' she said. 'What have you just been doing in the magician's palace?'

'Beautiful Farrukhnaz,' he replied, 'after having left you, I advanced towards the palace. I found the door open, I entered and saw no one, I only heard a plaintive voice, the sad accents of which drew me into a chamber whence it came. I found there, on a large sofa, a young lady having a yoke round her neck and iron chains on her feet; her arms were enclosed in a leather sack bound with ropes. The unhappy woman, bowed down under the weight of destiny, let her head fall sadly on her knees. I approached her out of pity, with the intention of comforting her. She raised her head, and I recognised in this unfortunate woman my liberator, the amiable Ghulnaze. I burst out into a fury at this touching sight. "O my queen," I cried, "in what state do I find you? What barbarous hands can have laden you with irons?"

'"O my dear Symorgue," she replied, "is it you that I see? What evil genius brings you back hither? Alas! you will soon be the victim of my

cruel sister. She discovered that I had saved you, and to punish me she keeps me in chains. I have been in them for a long time, but what distresses me more than all the rest is the danger to which you expose yourself. Fly at once; try to escape the inhuman Mehrefza."

'"What! my sultana," I replied, "you wish me to fly and abandon you! Do you think me capable of such black ingratitude? Ah! I would a hundred times rather experience your sister's anger. The most terrible death cannot terrify me when it is a question of extricating you from the situation in which I see you. Tell me, I pray you, what I must do to save you, and if the thing is possible I hope to succeed in it."

'"Since you are so courageous," replied Ghulnaze, "my liberty depends on you. Go to the west side of the garden; you will find my sister there, asleep on the flower-strewn grass. She has under her head a satin pillow. If you can take this pillow from her without awaking her, the key of my chains is in it, you will save me; but if you wake Mehrefza you are lost. There is no other means of breaking my chains; no human effort can effect it."

'"Trust to me," I then said to Ghulnaze; "I am going to bring you the key."

'I immediately left the palace and went to the western side of the garden, and perceived the magician asleep on the grass, her head resting on the cushion. I remained for some time uncertain what step to take, but the fear of awaking Mehrefza determined me to cut off her head with a sword. I killed the magician and brought the pillow to her sister, who awaited me with much impatience. I related to her what I had just done, and she appeared delighted. After that I took the key out of the bag and set my princess at liberty.

'Thus,' continued Symorgue, 'I have rid myself of the wickedest woman in the world. We can presently, divine Farrukhnaz, enter the palace. We shall find Ghulnaze, who is preparing to receive us there; she is as rejoiced at your arrival here as at her own deliverance.'

At these words he offered his hand to the Princess of Cashmere and conducted her to the palace. They met Ghulnaze, who came to meet them. She prostrated herself at the feet of the daughter of her king, but Farrukhnaz raised her,

kissed her tenderly, and showed her a thousand attentions.

'Beautiful Ghulnaze,' she said, 'I am charmed that the brave and generous Symorgue has served you so well. It is true,' she added smiling, 'that he was under too much obligation to you not to expose himself to the greatest dangers rather than leave you in chains.'

'O my princess,' replied Ghulnaze in the same tone, 'you see the stag does not forsake the doe when she is in need of his help.'

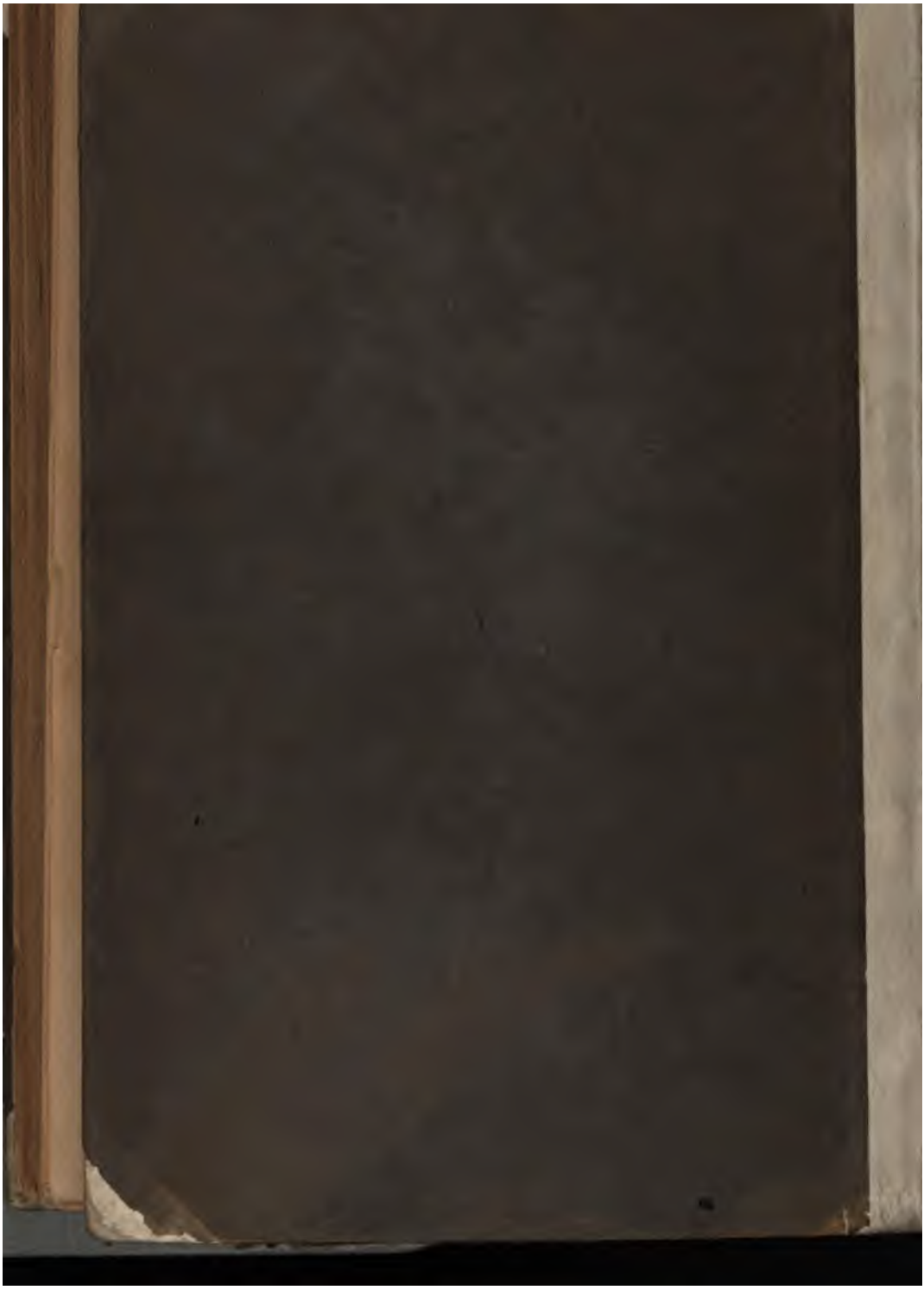
After talking a little while they entered the palace, which Farrukhnaz thought beautiful. Then they left it to go into the park, in which were more than three hundred stags. The magician's sister restored them to their natural form in the same way as she had done to Symorgue.

As they became men again, they threw themselves at the feet of their charming liberator to give her the thanks due to her. They were all, for the most part, young and well made. Some were Tartars, others Chinese, and others Carizmians. There were some from all parts of Asia; but Farrukhnaz's conductor was very surprised, and caused extreme astonishment to the princesses

when, suddenly detecting Prince Farrukhschad amongst the crowd of men, he ran and threw himself at his feet, saying: 'O my dear prince, is it possible that I find you here?'

'O my friend,' replied the Prince of Persia, 'is it Symorgue who presents himself before my eyes?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the confidant, 'it is he himself, and to crown everything, he brings to you the Princess of Cashmere.'

At these words he conducted his master to Farrukhnaz, who recognised in the prince the features she had seen in her dream, as, on his part, Farrukhschad knew at once that it was the princess whose image he cherished in his memory.

Whilst the Prince of Persia endeavoured to express to his mistress all the joy which animated him, Ghulnaze went into the meadow where the white does were. She also restored them to their original form, and they turned out to be very charming young ladies whom the magician her sister had changed. She led them before Farrukhnaz, who made them tell their stories. All these ladies had their lovers there, who were enchanted to see them once more released like them from the magic power which had kept them